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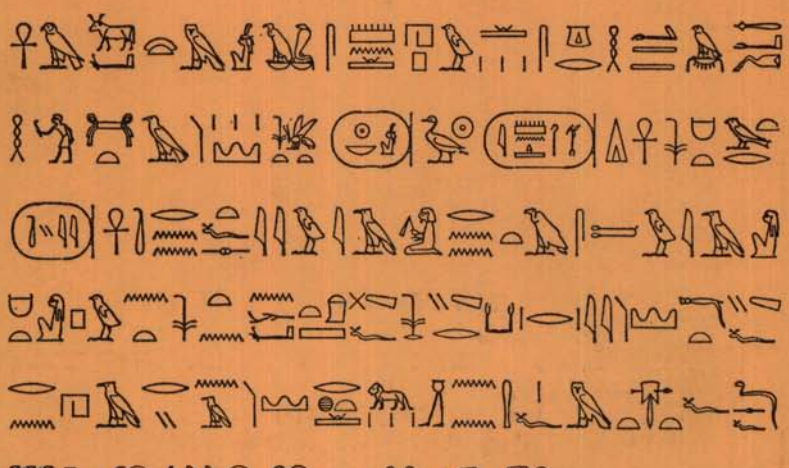

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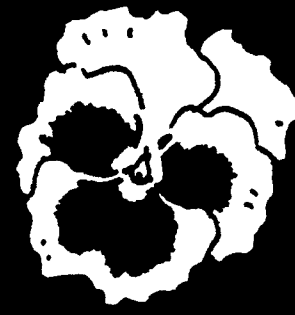

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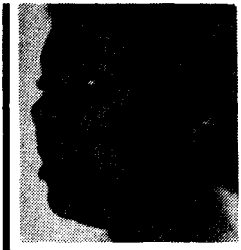

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The Paris Review is published by The Paris Review; S. A. R. L. au capital de 10.000 F. Vol 14, No 54. Numéro de presse 26.295. Summer 1972. European office at 17 rue de Tournon, Paris 6. American office at 45-39 171 Place, Flushing, New York 11358. Distributors in the USA: Eastern News Company and Doubleday & Co.; outside of France & USA: *Literary Services and Production Ltd., 26 Old Brompton Road, London* SW 7. Representative of The Paris Review Inc. of New York in France: Société Tourvoy, 17 rue de Tournon, Paris 6; la gérante: Mme. Colette Duhamel. Printed in Holland by Koninklijke Drukkerij G. J. Thieme, N.V., Nijmegen.

Price per copy in France: 5 F; in the USA: $1.25; in the UK: 40p. Post-paid subscription for four issues in France: 21 F; in the USA: $4; in the UK & sterling area: £1.50.

Fiction manuscripts should be submitted to the Flushing or Paris offices; poetry to Tom Clark, c/o Flushing office. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by addressed envelope and stamps or international postage coupons.

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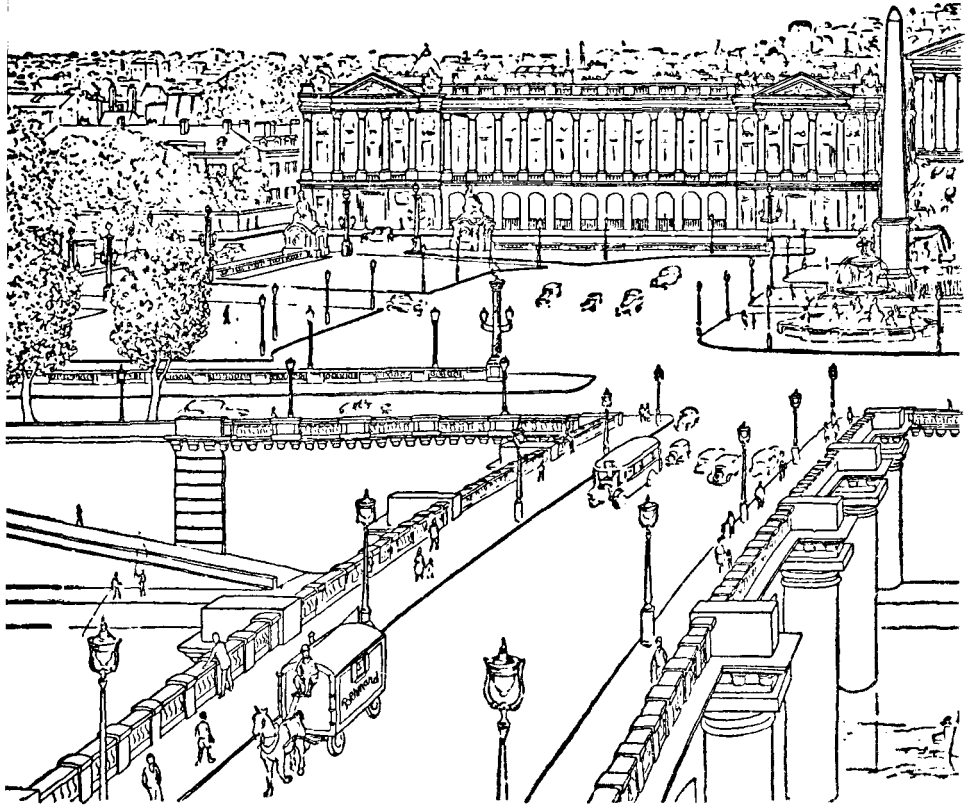

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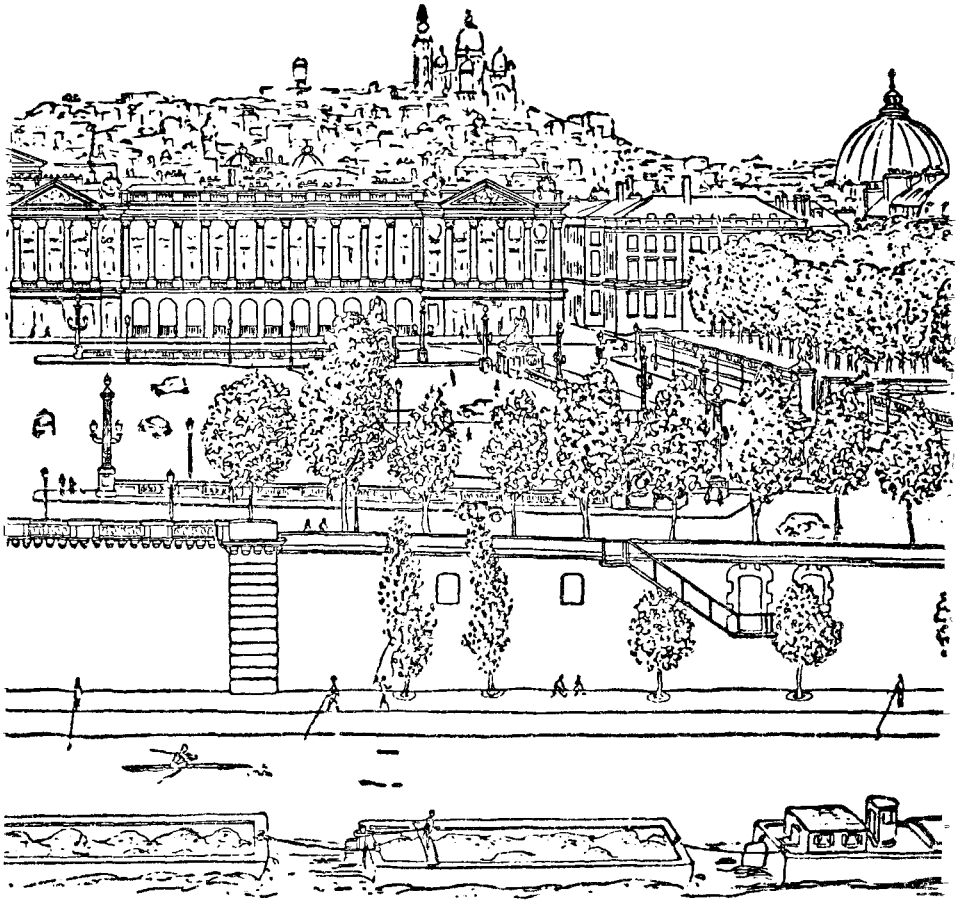

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Country of the Painted Freaks

David Shetzline

The first time Avram went over the bar everywhere he looked emerald Pacific Ocean was working, except for the sky—firm above all that motion and the cast of blue he imagined one would see on a television set just before its tubes shattered. Hundreds of feet below the raft on which he squatted with Biggest Ron, lay the continental shelf, another solidness where incredible things scuttled. Avram had already queried the local science center: cabezon and ling, hake, Irish lords, moray, wolf eel, great flat halibut the size of Volkswagens, variations of teeth and stomach enveloped in muscle and fin, all outrageously pigmented. In the middle waters cruised the commoner designs the fish markets consumed: salmon and sole and snappers. But from time to time through the Oregon coast waters the true monsters surfaced: great whales and basking sharks, dolphin and sunfish and sea lions, all passing in their season, rare to landsmen, but respected by each generation of fishermen. On hands and knees Avram followed the sunlight downwards through zillions of plankton where jellyfish wafted and miniscule lives glistened. He was at his very edge, having eaten one of Biggest Ron's smallest orange pills just before they lost control of the raft. Yet looking deep within the surge he felt himself drawn

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through terror and awe towards the peaceful understanding he could drop himself into that soup and after the initial pain of his bursting chest, sink on forever, disintegrating.

"Trouble with most those town people, they aint got no sense of humor." Ron leaned over, offering sweet ripple wine, the fifth dwarfed in his hand while his tendons bulged against the ocean chop. "Sorry about this rotgut, Av. I shouldn't have packed it along. But now we got it out here..." He showed large white teeth in a wide mouth under a straight nose between two extremely large brown eyes. Biggest Ron's eyes were much like a deer's with swept eyelashes that often tangled in his shingle of blond hair. He had large, thin ears and tied his hair with tuna line in a queue hanging to the small of his back.

Avram was about to sip just to be polite, then realized he did not have to be polite, ever again, to Ron. If indeed they ever came down off of this trip, why for a long time they'd have things very straight between them. Terror gurgled up through his center, blossoming over his face, itching. Ron distorted, limbs lengthening like cudgels, blondness radiating chestnut energy lines in which his wide brown eyes bulged, a Spanish Monk gazing through a Viking mask. Avram felt his teeth exposed to the salty air as his flesh cramped upwards in an acidic grin. Of course, he realized, Ron was slightly mad, the fishermen in town also, all fishermen always had been somewhat mad. Snug little boats—lines all shipeyshape and coppery bottoms drum tight for sailing the salty sea—seldom existed; such were landmen's tales, the sort of treacle mothers fed into the porches of their sons' ears to insure their sons thought all the possible worlds dull space, and so went dutifully to fill the place behind fathers' dentist chairs. Of course —Avram understood, looking into Ron's wild wet eyes—Ron probably felt They and Us all his life. Walls shifted in his mind while distances yawned, distances on which thoughts spread faint as butter under time horizons raddled with galaxies of possibilities. The mystery of danger—the palpable danger in so much of man's work—glowed on Avram's landscape and his muscles stiffened to it. I must, he knew. *I*

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must break my mold.

Ron withdrew his bottle, staring as if he were about to fall into Avram. "It's sort of a sense of humor, you know? I mean if any those guys had lent us a boat for a percent of clamming... but they're so used to renting them for money... can't see... the shift. The humor." He turned his face at the beaches from which they floated southwest on a driftwood platform woven together by pieces of nylon rope.

They had bobbed along the shores of the bay higher than the gulls above them, paddling at the mud flats to dig clams, when the outgoing tide sucked them over the bar atop the Pacific surge. Now the ropes showed wear and a mile out they could see no boats except tiny dots far to sea or shore. *Full fathom five my father lies. Of his bones are coral made.* Avram felt his mind shutting itself from panic so he looked again where Biggest Ron was studying his bottle, but not as if he was going to throw it away.

"Av, I watched that jetty going by with us in the rip and I never even thought of swimming. Shitman, I could have made that swim. Never thought of it. I never should mix acid with wine."

"Maybe you just shouldn't take wine out over the bar."

"I been on many trips, Av. Wine's always a friend."

Some of Ron's trips eased through Avram's head: foster homes, reform schools, biking, pulling crabpots, taking his woman Jo from an Iron Horseman cycling out of Seattle. Not so untypical, Avram thought. Then most recently, taking in Avram as a boarder. That was not very typical, maybe it explained the ripple wine somehow. For Avram, Ron's most impressive trip was at reform school when they were considering sending him on to the juvenile wing of the state penitentiary. One of the guards said: *They've some big guys up there'll tip up your ass and hide their sausage in it unless you swing on them... They like young stuff. It's switch or swing.* Ron had ripped off a butter knife and spent a full week sharpening its edge. But Jesus Ron, Avram had asked, they weren't bigger than *you*, were they? *Yeah. You see I grew up slow. Didn't put on much weight until* after *I made up my mind I wasn't*

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going to switch for no one. Of Ron's feats, that one lodged in Avram's head because he guessed it came closest to Ron as Ron saw himself: a skinny fawn-eyed kid with a weakness for sweet wine. And as long as Avram kept that in mind, they got along well, while the unenlightened could not see past Biggest Ron's bulk and if there was any real violence in them they tended to drive themselves up the wall scheming over what equipment they would need to control him.

Avram's own trips: Tremont Avenue, Bronx High School of Arts and Sciences, Harper College—certainly typical. Yet for Ron—that Avram could have lived such things and then split to the west coast of Oregon—truly remarkable. *Stoned*, Ron had said. *Far stoned out, man.* Ron sensed in Avram everything of the East: its street cunning, technical agility, its quick city way. And Avram recognized Ron from the movies: big, innocent, clean. Together they could make a huge success of something—whatever—and as much as this sent Avram up, its responsibility sometimes profoundly depressed. He was not sure he was ready yet for all that work.

Leaving the East had actually wasted him, the East being, after all, his home country where he could swing among the subways, surfacing here and there at one apartment or another, gathering up scenes like keys on a ring. But then Avram had seen his Purple Elephant. Purple Elephant grinned at Avram, Avram grinned back, and when he came down, he knew he could do just about anything to which he put his mind. Expansion was all. And Habit. He would expand his environments and change his habits. Besides, almost all his friends were either going into the Movement or splitting for the country, except for a few like his cousin, who had been a teenage patient at Bellevue and was determined to practice psychiatry. So telling his parents he was off to query graduate schools, Avram hitched the southern route, moving steadily across the first half of the continent and finding that even outside of Manhattan Island there seemed to be two Americas, each with a separate loyalty and language. He saw the war first in New Mexico where Spanish-Americans had turned against the head folk with predictable results: bracero night-

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riders shot down one in his own living room and raped a number of hippie ladies. A lot of the folk had split—except for the Texans—hog farmers and tree frog people—who sent home for their hunting rifles. The Jesus people remained, of course, digging the apocalyptic vibes. But much hair came off and many rings were eased from holes in noses and ears as many nice young couples backed off into the woodwork after painting their mailboxes battleship grey. Still, Avram might have stayed in that harsh, dry, beautiful country but it was so anciently new worldly he felt it was not, after all, white man's land.

He suffered his first wound in Flagstaff, Arizona, where he was busted for hitchhiking one hundred feet inside city limits, spent three days in jail, was fined every cent of his visible money and had his hair and beard barbered. While he read a Gideon bible, trying very hard to stay mellow, he realized he might not be able to kill the cop who shaved his head and took his money, but neither would he lift his tongue to intercede if one of the brothern or sistern did. That sort of thing he decided to discuss with his cousin, who might understand. Flagstaff depressed him terribly, but he figured it had shown him the face of the enemy and he had good luck: they found neither his invisible money nor the old mangled beer can of New Mexico grass laying up the road from where he hitched. When he came out of the slammer he kicked that old can over the city line and let it lay until he scored a ride, whereupon he scooped it up and rolled a bomber to share with the students who drove through to Los Angeles.

There he saw his first rich folk: leathered acidheads chauffeured in a prewar Mercedes staff car, sending off show business karma. The rest of the town was not that much different from the Manhattan money trip so he split for San Francisco where Berkeley truly laid him back. Berkeley was dead. The revolution had blown out, there was probably more street action in Santa Barbara or Seattle or Boston, and Berkeley was getting bookish again. Avram had been on books for seventeen years, so he did the sights like any other tourist, avoiding the bad dope and the wasted ladies peddling clap.

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Then he hitched north through soft croplands that repelled him as had the Midwest; into the redwoods and ponderosa which were—somehow—too scenic, too precious. He came to rest halfway up the coast of Oregon where he worked in a small cannery with a half dozen other folk who were being used as cheap seasonal labor. Three of them, a kid from Illinois, an army deserter from Massachusetts, and Ron, a native, shared the same name, but Ron was unquestionably the Biggest.

"No sense of humor," Ron repeated, gazing peacefully at the shore.

"Who?" Avram was suddenly terrified Ron was astrally projecting, abandoning him to drown alone with the body of Biggest Ron as mate, but the head off and away to some place warm and private.

"Most people round here. Like they look at this ocean and they say: *Well, there's the ocean. Far out. I'm seeing the ocean.* What they don't see is the ocean looking at them. They're on the edge of the ocean's world. And not the other way round."

They were quiet for a long time as the Pacific went up and down, wet parts of it reaching between the logs while flotsam of a thousand dead lives drifted with them and around them. "We are sure out of our world," Avram said, his fear a tangible seizure. Fear was coming on like hiccups but if he breathed carefully—as, he had read, women in childbirth breathed to ride over their pain—he could feel fear subside.

Ron turned and looked at him very carefully. "Know what? I think we're going to come down and out of this. If this ocean wanted us, it would have taken us when we went over the bar in the rip. But it's too flat. Would take least an hour to get rough. And then if these sticks start to break up, we got another twenty minutes in the water before we get numb. And if we tie ourselves together over a log we got maybe another forty minutes... So add it all..."

"It spells *Another Chance*."

They were both quiet, Avram thinking how very beautiful the ocean was and how certain people would migrate laterally across continents to get to the next ocean. All the while he

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breathed very carefully so Ron's words stayed in his head and his fear remained at the lip of his mind. Chances. Changes, he thought. Seasons. What had he read of Rilke? *You must change your life*. Poets, he realized for the umpteenth time, were really heavy. Being a poet had to be the heaviest thing a man could do, far more out of sight than being a saint, which had a bit too much of the locker room to it. Being a saint was a jock trip; saints were grown up superjocks. But poets were heads. Biggest Ron was a saint, maybe, or on the way. But Avram was more the poet.

"I guess..." Ron pronounced, after an hour passed without a boat in sight while the chop picked up perceptibly, "I never quite been on the edge like this."

"Not with a motorcycle?"

"Not me. I mean I was never past the point I could ease up and step down off the goddamn thing... Have you, Av?"

"My mind, perhaps." He remembered once in his teens he had been so infuriated that for an entire week he felt himself literally unhinging, as if blocks of space-time were swinging back and corridors were looming off into... he could not say. But he had felt such a plunge into himself would have crippled him horribly. Later he visited his cousin at Bellevue and saw in the eyes of the more helpless of his cousin's fellow patients that same pitiless terror. *I shall not hurl myself into myself like a suicide. I shall move on through like a scholar.* "The edge of the mind is a city thing," he explained. "Out here is more the edge of the body. Or both." Yes, he knew. *Both.*

They drifted. Talking. Occasionally Ron drank from his bottle, occasionally Avram sipped, occasionally one or the other raised himself to scan the swells, and always a gull or murre swam the air, the sea beside, above, while plankton streamed beneath and Avram's muscles stiffened with cold. Thinking of Socrates and water hemlock, he straightened at his turn, saw a salmon boat and sat again. A long moment went by while gates slammed in his head, fronts shifted and a grin split his face. Biggest Ron sensed it, muscled onto his feet and waved but the boat held steady until quite a bit beyond them. Only then did it seem to shudder, slow, and

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turn, trolling slowly, growing bigger. Avram didn't watch it, for others moved in the waters, a presence was there and from time to time he saw life at the corners of his eye—small fish scattering, a silver thing leaping. Avram drew his knees to him, fascinated with feeding life beneath, surrounding the raft.

"They're all round us." He spoke carefully, as if he wanted to do nothing to frighten them, thinking even so: *this lowering the voice in the presence of food—I am doing something now a million years old.*

Biggest Ron looked into Avram's face and whispered: "What?"

"Fish. Feeding."

Ron studied the water, nodding, pointing to where anchovy skittered the surface and shapes like the backs of silvered knives split the waters. When the salmon troller was almost to them they heard his signal bells clatter high on his outrigger tips and they watched him leap to his gurdies to roll up the two main cables, plucking off the lines that held no fish, until he could draw a salmon in close to his boat. There he poised, hanging in some ancient position out over the deep water, gaff in hand while a salmon came alongside, drawn in by the line until the fisherman struck, sweeping the fish clear so they hung together against the seascape, the fish's body arched in death with steel through his head, the fisherman twisting against the weight of the fish to bring him up over the side and onto the deck. Thrice was this harvest repeated while the boat trolled by. Then the salmon were gone, Avram could sense it.

"Gone."

"Yeah. And our friend after them. But he'll be back." Ron sat and finished his bottle. "You see that? Big silvers. Like throwing a ten-dollar bill down on the deck each time. If I had that kind of boat I'd fish it every day of the season then buy a piece of property I got my eye on up there—" He pointed up the mountains above the receding bay. "Surround myself with friends, man. People to take care of me. Start up a goddamn commune. Freak farm."

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Avram nodded, but saw only that frozen instant, the fisherman hanging far far out over the deep waters, the great silver fish arched with the curve of steel fastened to his body, fish and fisherman staring into each other atop the ancient sea. "Let's buy a boat."

"I'm your man." Ron showed his teeth. "I figured you had something up your sleeve. I know of a dory we can score, man. Outrigger's in already, all we need's a couple motors, lines, hand gurdies, tackle..."

"I'll send for my money tonight." They waved to the fisherman who was moving at them, reeling in lines one by one so when he stopped they would not all tangle. *We've spoiled his fishing for the day*, Avram thought.

"Jesus." Ron studied the mountains. "Jo will really dig a place of her own. Always been her trip... How much bread you got, Av?"

"Couple hundred."

"WHAT?"

"But I know where we can raise the rest."

"Oh, shit man. Don't do that to me. I don't like to kid about something like this. Where you gonna get the rest?"

"I'm going to sell your motorcycle—"

"ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR FUCKING MIND? MY CHOPPER? *MY* CHOPPER?"

"—Because you don't need it anymore. You're getting too old for that sort of thing. You need land and property and a place for your old lady—"

"You CRAzy FUCKing Jew BAStard east-coast nut! You College FREAK! Where'd they teach you to look a man in the face and even think such a thing?"

"—Or else you're nothing but another big bellied biker who'll lose his old lady one of these days and get himself drunk and stoned and wrap himself under a semi."

"If that troller hadn't spotted us you'd be over the side this thing. I never want to see you again. Never. I never want to hear your weird Bronx voice again. This is my town and you get the fuck out of it." Ron sunk to his heels—Indian fashion—and glared at the shoreline, eyes huge and blank.

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Avram lay his hand on the pad of muscle over Ron's shoulder and watched the tendons moving along Ron's jaw and counted the strokes of blood entering Ron's temple while he spoke into one large thin ear: "We are not going to say anymore about this. We are simply going to go in there and do it. It's time for changes."

And so the second time Avram went over the bar it was in their own dory, a plywood double ender with a forty horse outboard in the stern hole—strictly a calm seas and prosperous voyage affair designed for weekend sportsmen—but a hull they might have fished some thirty-odd days of the following two months had they gauged the bar very very carefully. Instead they chanced some fog, caught groundswell, bar swell and wind chop all in the same ribbon of water, and rolled, Avram drowning in the process. That is, Avram took very bad punishment, his worst trip, punishment he realized he survived only because his body was so young. Had it not been simply the youth of the fibers of his heart, none of Ron's muscle would have helped. For almost an hour, in the bitterest coldest water Avram's body had ever known, they clung to the overturned dory, drifting with agonizing slowness into the sound of breakers mindlessly battering the shore. Then with no warning they were seized from beneath, atop, going over and over and over with Ron's arm tearing him free of the wood into which his nails had locked while the water pressed into his mouth, his stomach, earholes, crushing with such pain Avram screamed in the deepest crannies of his brain, driven by such a dying into animal rage. Finally on the beach—vomiting, his nose rushing blood, eyes streaming tears, teeth jumping in their bones as if every one had been tapped with a hammer, testicles drawn achingly up against his body, anus oozing warm liquids—he watched his torn shaking hands crawl the sand, while inside his head his own voice pleaded: *All right. Death by water, then. We need a bigger boat. Lady, believe me. Lady, I get your message...*

Next to him Ron's voice shook: "Man, that was a Mind-Fuck."

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Of course he had been thinking steadily about another boat while his senses froze in the water, he had been pairing up dualities, taking stock of the past weeks. Biggest Ron, for one, had become Bigger Ron when Ron the Deserter from Massachusetts was picked up on some routine traffic violation and could produce very little identification. Massachusetts Ron had been jailed on suspicion and although the folk worked all night to raise bail and line him up a ride north over the border, the others, the grey people with their other language and loyalty, held him till the teletype came back from Washington and the MP's came down from Fort Lewis to take him away. Ron's old lady Jo led a bunch of women to the jail the last night where they serenaded Massachusetts Ron. Biggest Ron had gotten very drunk, howling mad animal drunk and wept—moons of water oozing from his brown eyes—standing in the yard of his shack in the Oregon woods yawping at the sky. Avram sat inside, head in his hands, shoulders rocking to and fro while his mind moved steadily backwards from one forwarding address to another, where, somewhere, even then, his own message from his own draftboard was pursuing slowly as the laws would allow: *Greetings!*

Yes, that problem had to be handled. Also the problem of catching more fish. They were learning steadily, but fishermen were old, proud, loners. Avram would like to talk with the Russians, they lay off the coast netting fish for the factories in their mother ships, sneaking in under the fog to fish salmon with their illegal nets, playing their games with the Coast Guard. But there were not enough of the new people with them, either. Then there was money. Pressed against the dory, his mind numbing, he cast back across the continent—but for quick money could only think of driving for an outfit in Brooklyn making military truck bodies. Delivering to Them while He waited for Them to catch Him appealed, that was close enough to the edge, it might teach him something, lord knew he had tried all the conventional deferments. Even his psychiatrist cousin had denied him—thrice, Avram noted, bemused—explaining that he realized Avram sought neither to kill nor go to jail, but he could not lie and break a rotten

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law. *What* did *they do to you in Bellevue?* Avram had thought, looking at the son of his own father's brother.

Bigger Ron, on the other hand, stored tales of the less conventional deferments like a pack rat because his criminal record forever denied that adventure. Some of the farthest out people had pulled off deferments—it was becoming a test for genius. Ron's eyes would bulge shiny, his voice plunge grave as he spoke of friends who had wired, zonked, starved, wasted and strung themselves, sporting with death's monsters and grotesque self-animations, going far far, way way—painted and tattooed and blown escapees from unwritten sick poems—*and all the while the orange liquid marble eaters chewed through the walls old Ralphie laughed, sitting under that psychiatrist's desk naked in a puddle of piss and shit, so when the shrink reached to reason with him Ralphie grabs his hand and nearly bites off his finger. But that aint all.* Then *the mushrooms hit and he starts to sweat all over and because of that other stuff Ralphie's sweating blue ink and...* Avram's mind numbing in bitter Pacific slid that aside and thought only of money and fish. He would go back to the East Coast for money, back to books to learn fish. Yet death by water had brought such pain he allowed—briefly allowed—his mind to open and clamp about the prospect of self-mutilation. Why not suffer a hunting accident to the big toe? Could it possibly be worse than what the ocean had done to him in the surf?

He parted from Bigger Ron to drive the trails back and forth, delivering refrigerated locker wagons to various military motor pools, seeing in the eyes of those who accepted the ignition keys a shade of Bellevue. They would not get him, he had somehow drifted over a line. Died. Begun. They could kill him, roast and eat him, what did it matter? He looked into their faces and they could not meet his eye, turning from him in disgust and envy; making him feel so lonely, so alone. In his mind he always returned to the ocean, the fisherman leaning over the waters, the face of Bigger Ron saying *OK we'll sell my chopper but if Jo asks, it was* my *idea*. Following long dark highways Avram found himself laughing aloud and alone out upon some piece of vast landscape.

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Tiger tiger burning bright. Once he was so lonely he stopped on a Missouri shoulder, set his flashers blinking and stumbled towards a fence beyond which a landscape of wheat whispered under the stars. Hanging on the wire, the barbs between his fingers, he felt terror constricting his throat and he swallowed, swallowed, while his teeth shook and the tears came down into his beard and he wept, remembering Bigger Ron weeping in his clearing in the Oregon brush, throwing tear-struck eyes at the moon, howling for his namesake in the grey people's jail. *I'm not going to make it either,* Avram whispered inside himself. *There's too much work to it,* he said, aloud. *I'm* LONELY. I'M ALL ALONE, he bayed at the stars. In the vacuum of his shout the landscape went still, no cars passed, the warning lights of his truck blinked silently, all life sounds ceased as his shout rushed everything into silence. Avram stood, mouth open, eyes dripping for a long empty moment. And then he heard it. A frog. A cricket, a creature. An answer. Another. Dozens. Hundreds, millions. Mouth open, he listened to a thousand zillion energies pouring out while an acidic grin lifted the corners of his eyes. *Oh yes I will.* You bet your sweet ass, he said, softly, so as not to disturb the others. *Silence has muscles,* he remembered from a poem. And went back to his work.

From time to time he would touch down with Ron, where he would sleep for days until Jo fixed him pots of tea to get him back to ten cents a mile plus expenses. She would touch his arm and laugh at him, saying he was getting heavy, the road was putting weight on him. Telling him about her sister who would be biking down from Seattle in the Spring. And in the evening before he went back onto the road Ron would make him sip a little sweet ripple wine while the rain beat down and Avram studied the plans for the boat they would build. Already they had its hull—a solid timbered thirty-five footer—but all the rest must be built by hand. Ron looked upsidedown at the plans, bored, blinking, fascinated by the words, numbers, the bookishness of the thing. *I aint gonna be Bigger much more,* he grinned. *Illinois Ron's thinking of going south out of the rain. Guess he don't have anything together going for him.*

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Very early next spring the wind began to warm into a chinook and the rain came with grey fronts as if tired. *Greetings!* had caught up with Avram, so he moved slowly, relearning to walk after a brief hunting accident to the great toe of his left foot. In a shed by the bay he and Bigger Ron pounded nails, cut timbers, drove bolts and fastened and braced. Some older fishermen watched, saying little but from time to time assisting as the wind died off, exhausted. By and by Illinois Ron came to sit and watch, looking wastedly at the lowering rains while their hammers beat the wheelhouse tight and worms of shaving and borings crept from the tools, carpeting the sanded deck. *Guess I'll go south*, Illinois Ron announced, hiding his hands in his pockets.

"Stay mellow, man," called Bigger Ron. "You ever get back this way and need a place to crash—why hang out with us."

Avram looked up from a particularly nasty aching piece of labor, but Illinois Ron's eyes had already shied away so Avram went back at his job, fighting a mean warp in a piece of red cedar that had to fit just so. When he finally could allow himself a break for a joint, Illinois Ron had gone.

Days, weeks, two months. He knew something had happened, time had changed, when he read a letter from his cousin. *...and so I was thinking of you out there... of moving myself. But everyone here finds it unwise. No one advises it. Moreover, I wanted to tell you I've contracted a touch of what seems to diagnose as mild sciatica. Annoying. But as these encumbrances sometimes run in families, you might want to watch...* Not in my family, Avram thought, using the letter to wedge a stud before he and Ron lay shiplap siding and walled the words up within their work.

Just before summer they painted the hull carefully, expensively, to seal it tight. But the wheel house was done in great swirls of color until they themselves were covered with paint. Then they braced scaffolding at the bow and fashioned two round eyes slowly, meticulously. On Ron's side the eye was round, brown and aimed slightly upwards into the mountains, while Avram's eye was blue, almost cold, aimed out

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where the ocean shrugged over the bar. And so, after months of work, Avram went out for the third time, their boat rising up, up upon a huge ground swell, then down between two walls of ocean, then up again easily and free of the shore, the rocks, the land.

I was wrong, Avram realized. There is not that much insanity to this. If you put your boat together, why then you know every piece. If you do the work yourself you know every weakness. *I was wrong, there is chance here and change here, but not madness. It is only a matter of doing the work.*

Atop the wheelhouse loosening the outrigger fastenings, Avram sensed the ocean stretching in unbelievable vastness until his eyes seemed to pull from his head, while down at his feet things in the water rose vertically like a jungle stretching upwards at the sun in its shattered blue sky. Setting his weight, he lowered the rigging and together he and Ron baited up and finally began to troll back and forth on the edge of those waters.

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Allen Ginsberg

An Open Window on Chicago

Midwinter night,
  Clark & Halstead brushed with this week's snow
  grill lights blinking at the corner
                decades ago
  Smokestack poked above roofs & watertower
    standing still above the blue
                lamped boulevards,
  sky blacker than th'east
    for all the steel smoke
                settled in heaven from South.
Downtown—like Superman's Gotham City
            battleshipped with Lights,
  towers winking under clouds,
    police cars blinking on Avenues,
            space above city misted w/fine soot
cars crawling past redlites down Avenue,
                exuding white wintersmoke—
Eat Eat said the sign, so I went in the Spanish Diner
The girl at the counter, whose yellow bouffant roots
    grew black over her pinch'd face,
    spooned her coffee with knuckles
            puncture-marked,
  whose midnight wrists had needletracks,
            scars inside her arms:—
  "Wanna go get a Hotel Room with me?"
                The Heroin Whore
thirty years ago come haunting Chicago's midnite streets,
    me come here so late with my beard!

Corner Grill-lights blink, police car turned around
  & took away its load of bum to jail,
    black uniforms patrolling streets
  where suffering

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lifts a hand palsied by Parkinson's Disease
to beg a cigarette.

The psychiatrist came visiting this Hotel 12th floor—
Where does the Anger come from?
Outside! Radio messages, images on Television,
Electric Networks
spread
fear of murder on the streets—
"Communications Media"
inflict the Vietnam War & its anxiety on every private skin
in hotel room bus—
Sitting, meditating quietly on Great Space outside—
Bleep Bleep dit dat dit radio on, Television
murmuring,
bombshells crash on flesh
his flesh my flesh all the same—.
The Dakini in the hotel room turns in her sleep
while War news flashes thru Aether—
Shouts at streetcorners as bums
crawl in metal policevan.
And there's tiny church in middle Chicago
with its black spike to the black air
And there's the new Utensil Towers round on horizon.
And there's red glow of Central Neon
on hushed building walls at 4 AM,
And there's proud Lights & Towers of Man's Central City
looking pathetic at 4 AM, traveler passing through,
staring outa hotel window under Heaven—
Is this tiny city the best we can do?
These tiny reptilian towers
so proud of their Executives
they haveta build a big sign in middle downtown
to Advertise?
Old Connor's Insurance sign fading on brick
building side
Snow on deserted roofs & parkinglots—
Hog Butcher to the World!?

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Taxi-Harmonious Modernity grown rusty-old—
The prettiness of Existence! To sit at the window
& moan o'er Chicago's stone & brick
lifting itself vertical tenderly,
hanging from the sky.
Elbow on windowsill,
O lean and muse, taller than any building here
Steam from my head
wafting into the smog
Elevators running up & down my leg
Couples copulating in hotelroom beds in my belly
& bearing children in my heart,
Eyes shining like warning Tower Lights
Hair hanging down like a black cloud—
Close your eyes on Chicago and be God,
all Chicago is, is what you see—
That row of lights Finance Building
sleeping on its bottom floors,
Watchman stirring
paper cups of coffee by great Bronzed glass doors—
and under the bridge, brown water
floats great turds of ice beside buildings' feet
in windy metropolis
waiting for a Bomb.

Jan 8, 1967

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Tom Clark

On Venus

I like breathing better than work
but strange is the meat
when it is yanked out of the sky
and arrows are shot into it
Nothing is personal then
and everything is true
including both love's great circumambience
and the hideous skull-glare in the mirror
which pulses and glows
like some videotape of the future

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Water

The fog comes in, flatter
than ever. The air, apparently

is blue somewhere, not here.
Flat and linear. The women

can't escape except through speech
so they go to the beach.

I know. I'll talk to
the wall and for once, tell all.

I'll be its friend
as it bends, and fall with it.

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The Door to the Forest

Eric Dolphy can't wake up:
the green light's still burning
by the gate. Pine cones

when stepped on by
dogs or raccoons, click
gently, like bones

into the mist, which
smells like mint; the
sounds diminish it;

the white fire rose
through the dropper's eye
falls; and the rain remains.

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The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium

Harry Mathews

Part Six

LXXV

Jan. 28

The tail of the cat
Fell into the vat
The tail of the man
Fell into the can

Do these lines perplex? So did your letter. What kind of explanation is this—your "trip to the country"! Doubt may be a good spur to the imagination, but you have abused it and me.

You are perhaps weary of my groans; there has, however, been a special disappointment. Yesterday at noon Mr. Hood invited me into his office. He seated me in front of his vast desk to address me in fatherly, adamantine style. I copped bad news. Sure enough: "...reports from the field...speed-up...expedition advanced to early March...." After these words had burned into my marrow, he added, "You're the first to be warned, so you can muster your resources. Others who shall be nameless might want to force you out. By the way, I gather you and Dex are friendly again. Ten days ago I saw him outside your place. He was talking to a cute little lady in a sari, or whatever it's called in Siam."

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The office was aglitter with white suits and shoes, and papers flashing among his glamorous male staff. The tumult seemed to enhance the light and perfectness of his eyes.

Now what?

It shocks me that your letter doesn't contain one word of apology. (Or mention meeting Hodge.)

When I left, I made the mistake of walking a few blocks to let my blood subside, and so wandered into the cross-city dog race. This event is probably unique in the history of carnivals, and for good reason. It is open not only to greyhounds and other speedy breeds but to all dogs—the prizes allow for size, age, and weight. The result is twelve hours of pandemonium, aggravated by the many owners who, lest their entries weaken in the way, follow them from Coral Gables to the far side of Venetian Causeway.

I was so preoccupied that not until I was upended by a low-flying basset did I realize where I was. Getting up, I was consoled by an unwelcome Samaritan—an affectionate wet-snouted boxer bitch. When I tried to shoo her away, I was accosted by her wroth owner, who yelled at me, turning redder with each stubborn word, "Wh-why are you b-b-bothering B-b-b-beya?" (Bayer? Bear? Baby Bear?) At this moment enthusiasts on either side began shouting—"Come on, Apollo 20!" "Get with it, Gabritius!"—thoroughly deafening me. During six volatile seconds I expected Beya's master to strike me; but he kicked her instead.

The rest of the day was better. There was nobody at the office, and I wrote off a few more maps. The evening stint at the patch passed quickly. I had Chinese 'tweeners across the way, then drove to Haulover Beach Park for the evening show. I arrived well ahead of time. The stage was bare, nearly all the seats empty. A noisy speck appeared in the sky, flickering in the sunset light: a helicopter carrying the set for the performance.

Tobacco, the ballet of the day, was part of a festival series about local products. It was worth the price of admission (actually I had a free ticket.) The scene was the island of Tobago, from which the plant was once thought to derive its

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name. We saw two Indians perform a *pas de deux* extolling the magic virtues of the leaf; four priests scatter tobacco shreds to calm wild storms; and seven witches conduct rituals of worship with fumes from wetted clay pipes. Then the corps de ballet, as a crowd of snuff addicts, did an energetic sneezing number, and finally a patriarch gathered young men from all the nations of the earth into a brotherly Smoking Academy. This was unexpectedly moving. A timely Havana-colored moon rose over the beclouded dancers.

Diana, my sister, is here on business. She had asked me to an after-dinner party in her hotel suite, to which I went out of politeness, and had a marvelous time. I was the only man there. Although tough as a tank, Diana was almost motherly. She steered me clear of the virginal twists for whom I naturally yearn to a riper triad of sisters named Asham—Marcia, Molly, and Aline, of whom I decided that the first two were sufficient unto the hour. (Aline seemed lion-toothed as well as haired.) Diana somehow depicted me to those girls in irresistible lineaments, and I enjoyed a moment's adoration. This even helped cure an intolerable boil—but I shall not irritate you with details.

Which reminds me—I haven't deciphered your Pan phrases. When I first saw them, without translation, I admit I clenched my fits in annoyance. I shall look through your letters for the explanations. Did you really think I would remember all these words?

LXXVI

Jan 31

No more again Pan words ever. (Yet they are the language that dreams. And secrets.)

And was Twang to think? the gentleman asked for the time of the morning, still your door will not responds, is the Mr. Hodge.

It is more for Twang to reprove: your trivial joys with women, what a bath, fish in mud, they can smile, it has make

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you stuprid. You must contemplate the word "decline", to dissipate the idea "closeness". What is, perception of impurety? One is to inspect, so to reflect: the parties of his body from the sores of his feet to the ends of his hairs is in every sense subjects to the corruption. See that, this is the observation of corruption. Then the consciousness too is horrupt: appears, is dissolute. It must be to renounce the joying of life. It is Twang that has love for you.

These are the later years of *Salvestro*. Never does he obtain that treasure. After 1457 he's abandoned hope, he knagged the cousins cowever on till 1465. The next year he joins *Francesco Neroni* in the conspiracy to throw the *Medici* over. Salvestro is reveal in *Neroni's* wide screen confession. So the new *Balía* of *Medici* men votes him into exile Sett. 11 1466 because he has "take up wheapons against the fatherland." (So, of each conspirator.)

Then for 15 years *Salvestro* wanders through the proximate countries of Italy. He looks perhaps for friends to his rights. In the end he calls his old old mother *Mantissa* from Florence. From Venice they sail together away on the long trip back to her homeland, he will become there a spices merchant. Goodbye, *Salvestro Sguardofisso*.

That *Mantissa* I trace too back to before her arriving, to her insurance policy, this is taken for her during the awfle journey from Tana to Venice, it is for 75 gold florins, except if she die from leaping willful in the sea. That sea death was often, so kind the white Christians to the colorful infidels.

It has been as in my expressed fear, that the Prince is unpleased with me, after that sudden arrival of you. So he tell Bonzo. I know nevertheless that the Pindola will sustain me, and my worth. It is a strong leaning to have him thus. Although in this day he is something sulky, after drinking much white whine.

Can you remember, the same *Francesco Neroni's* fear, when he write to *Salvestro* in '57, of indiscretion? He was just. I find a letter of the Florentine merchant *Pazzino Cicciaporci* date 1460, here he speak of "certain tresor weaved into bolts of silk." Before he die *Beccadelli* mentions that too, in a little satiric poem. This means, the news goes even to Naples.

Once you tell me, that of the first Italian missionaries in

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Pannam, those very first that come by land, in the ending of the 15eenth century, there are some baptismals, marriages, deaths records still, they survive my climate, and if this be true you have photograph these for your mission? Then, may Twang request those microphilm, together with the next check.

LXXVII

Sunday, Feb. 3

It's unfair to condemn me for a few instants of distraction. Neither Marsha nor Molly Asham counts for peanuts. You imply that my resolves to avoid insignificant people are not sincere. This is wounding.

And there you go dunning again! Didn't I send you money last week? Forgive the expression. But each time my feelings reach out toward you for esteem and friendship and all that is soft, you clutter them with trash and dirt.

Furthermore, I'm down to my last bumblebee and bean. The day before yesterday I went to the office to make the contribution to Key Betabara: $2,200. This included every penny I could find. I even closed the hometown savings account, that I'd kept out of nostalgia, sixty-two dollars and thirty-four cents. The trouble is, I don't *own* anything.

Mr. Hood was busy but received me. Among the comings-and-goings he sat in basiliscal dignity, with quicksilver eyes. He heard me out with evident disappointment. The sum was too small. He showed a touching sympathy with my plight—I almost felt obliged to comfort *him*. He explained that I needn't put up a dime for his sake, but there were the other backers. He had already defended my interests against outside bids.

As if to confirm these words a relay of men swarmed around us with messages from banks and financiers: offers of ten, thirty, fifty, and once a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. My depression sprang a new icicle at each figure.

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Mr. Hood promised to support my candidacy a little longer, and urged me to get busy. I assigned the twenty-two C's to him as proof of my good faith. Then I went around the corner to The Glass Slipper where, although I had planned a leaf-and-fruit day, I had three slugs of philosopher's wine.

Well, the multitude of the isles had better ready themselves. I shall go with those others if I have to hang onto their boat with my teeth. Is it unreasonable that I should feel so violetly about this, that it should have become my sole obsession? I know—don't ask me why—this treasure and ours are the same.

I am day after day in a state of exceptional nervousness. My insomnia is entering the hallucinatory stage, with purple crows nesting in my pillow. Not only the dismaying turn of events is responsible for this. I'm still groggy from my trip, and each day our carnival makes repose a little more problematic. At night spotlights of great power play over the city and cause the most swaddled window to glow. Nor have our ears been neglected. Noise flows relentlessly from peculiar electronic devices that amplify distant sounds and diminish those nearby. Thus one lives among vast echoes of ducks and Indian choirs; at dawn cockcrows issue from a phantasmal barnyard.

Another network of speakers broadcasts carnival tunes. The music has been planned like a grand operetta: a few songs are reprised with ever-increasing frequency.

The worst moments, the ones that wake me up for good, are the silences. A capricious glider hovers over Miami, projecting a beam that switches off all sound equipment beneath it. When it passes over my block, the effect is of doom.

At least there are no "surging crowds" in the streets, so that I can stretch my legs in peace.

They're playing one of those songs—

I may be black, I may be red,
I may be yellow, I may be white,
I may be red, yellow, black, or white
But I'm blue

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Meanwhile the Guest pursues his irresistible dance, and the daughters of Judah dance for joy in his steps.

It's time to wing this on its way. The library will send the microfilms you requested. Why do you want them? Their condition is bad, but they are legible—they were preserved by your "breathing vases" during their long burial.

LXXVIII

2.6

What, then, is the "bumblebean"?

My dear Zachary, I have now assemble from the measureless Medici paperdom a dossier almost complete of the treasure. That is now folded beneath my unwriting hand. Yet the most important, most desired, lie within my head—in the archive, mess where only Twang can find; so in my head.

O I'm so sick of this seedy old dwelling. There is a dog of household, friendly, and so great that I can ride him, last night this ridable mut open my room and pipi in my slippers, not of glass. But shall Twang maybe move to a worst place if there is no money?

However my brain is clear, and yours is most not. It become very necessary that you think: contemplate "considered contemplation", this shall dissipates the idea of non-contemplation.

LXXIX

Feb. 10

Enclosed is a check. It's smaller than usual. If you ever peruse my letters you may be aware of the local shortage.

Last Wednesday, after several attempts to see Mr. Hood, I managed to speak to him by phone. In desperation I told him about my access to the maps in the library and suggested contributing some of them as part of my stake. I even pro-

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posed *our* map. (If the Key Betabara treasure is the same as ours, my map won't tell them much they don't already know. And if it isn't the same, it's certainly worth as much going after. How can I lose?) Mr. Hood was surprised that I had a copy. Then I was obliged to explain that I expected to be in possession of one very soon. This is true. There are only 138 maps left. He promised to think it over.

Yesterday Hodge came to the patch. He brought the tidings of Mr. Hood's acceptance, but maliciously concealed them for a good half-hour. According to Hodge, Mr. Hood disliked the arrangement. It was bad business, and he was only agreeing to it out of friendship.

Dex was disgusting. One minute he was sneering at my poverty; the next, he insisting that we "bunk together" on the trip. (He may have another insist coming.) Admittedly I was ill-disposed towards him since a few nights ago he had an intimate dinner with Grace to which I was definitely not invited, and Grace confided a lot of things that Dex refuses to divulge. I tried to show what I think of him but he refused to notice. If this sounds like ingratitude I can only say that I have no strength left for gratitude.

To speed up my map research, I've been replaced as watchman. What a relief! This afternoon I took an hour off to stroll through the decorated streets. At least the weather has been pleasant. Each day comes in like one of an endless succession of ambassadors from the kingdom of Prester John. However, the night moons are fuzzy.

Of course I saw only a tiny part of the displays. At street level there is living sculpture; higher up, Cinerama screens on which immobile personages appear. (Their purpose is to encourage meditation.) The live shows present great scenes from comics, television, books, or history. At a sports intersection one might see "Casey at the Bat" (books) and "Mickey Owen's Mistake" (history). Emphasis is placed on the subject's ethical or philosophical significance, in both these cases close to the Buddhist notion, "Only impermanence is permanent."

(I should mention that no decorations survive the end of

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carnival. Nevertheless, first-class designers compete for the privilege of contributing their work. This is one reason for the high quality of our celebrations. Another is that while most cities import their festival staff, Miami maintains its own year-round. But most important is the community spirit that fills us all during carnival time. We become members of one colossial family.)

There were few people in the streets at the time of my walk. Everyone was at Interama watching the archery-plus-rhetoric contest. For his turn the Guest appeared in the skull-and-bones suit that he wears ever more frequently.

Harvard has sent the letters written to Lorenzo de' Medici by his representative in Lyons. They are of little interest. One or two mention the treasure. In August 1481 Lionetto complains that a chest of silk marked "as you describe" with black birds arrived "incomplete—much darnel but no wheat." It was essential for the prosperity of the Lyons branch that the rest be sent. Later Lionetto repeats the complaint, adding that several buyers are interested in that "particular silk," which he has widely advertised. However, after the signature there is a note: "...I am glad that at last this devious gold has escaped its ultramontane destiny..." The letter, incidentally, is a copy in Lionetto's hand, and was kept by him.

Now we know how the treasure reached Lionetto. I couldn't care less.

I have had more sleep at night, but spoiled by dreams. Friday I was on a beach that I had never seen. My father was walking along it, gray, unshaven, in tatters. There was a giant fly closely following him. There was a man who was also my father sitting in the cockpit eye of the fly. There was my first father withering as he trudged through the slow sand, finally stumbling, then crawling on his knees, then prostrate. Meanwhile there was a wet salty squall blowing a smudge of fish scales over the large eye where my other father was sitting; he stopped the fly and got out, walking towards the ocean and giving the prone body a kick that broke it to piece. There was my surviving father clean-shaven and rosy. There was a girl splashing in the waves—you. Your wet tresses were even

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straighter than usual. There was my father who started playing with you, but I saw little of that because the sight of you was too much and I woke up in a tumult of semi-pleasure, bathed in my own slime. It was the first and only time in my life this has happened.

LXXX

February 13

That you decide to deliver map to Miles Hood is all right. I approve. But, you will not find it, I think.

I'm much anxious, lest you be condamned to having always these nightmares at night and broodmares at day. It is, again, the *pristwe* "demon" that visit you. He will seem to be of the third class (out of illusions sustaining egoistic arrogance) but no, poor Zachary, it is of the first class—bad outside influences, of such we say,

"They bring fear, they pass through changes, innocent things have terrifying appearances, unoffending women will appear as bewitches.

"Very early, between three and four of clock, you will feel that you see tigers; from five to seven, unoffending rabbits, yet who, nevertheless, scare. From seven to nine you will feel that you perceive very bad dragons, or turtles. From nine to eleven you will have the impression that you see snakes. From eleven to 1 you will have the illusion that you see horses. From 1 to 3 the apparitions will be of sheep; from 3 to 5 of monkeys. At dsk the illusions will be of vultures and crows. In the shades of night they will resemble dogs and wolfs. From 9 to 11 they will have the appearance of pigs, or repignant things; from 11 to one, of rats racing off and mice. From 1 to 3 you will see the apparition of cows, that threaten and bring fear.

"So assailed, remember what time, and remove these appearances. Call them by names. They will vanish."

Practice the halt of thought, the mind will quiet, and the armies of Mara will vanish. Perhaps too should you have a

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micetrap if that is the hardest hour? And sometime change the color of the upbolstery?

My friend Bonzo is a dearest friend. He has smoothed the Prince, and presents to him my knowledge of the treasure dossier, for negotioating. I'm closer to him, than ever.

This most: contemplation of "vacancy" will dispel ideas of adherence.

LXXXI

I stay in the library day and night. My guardian angel still seems to be out to lunch.

Day and night, but there is no longer any night. A horde of permanent flares has been loosed over Miami. Each generates a downward thrust just strong enough to keep afloat. They emit an aqueous sparkle. One is now bobbing outside my window, these lines ripple in green light.

With little more than a fortnight to run, the carnival knows no pause. Outside, on the campus, a Ferris wheel revolves through the dark hours. Thousands of smudge pots are fixed to its rims. The riders are murky blobs behind the turning flames.

Tonight I had been invited to an elite gathering at the Brissy St. Jouin. The evening is devoted to the "Inner Muffle."

There was no question of attending. I have chained myself to one cycle of gestures. I peer into a map for several hours, usually emptying even my 69 fountain pen ("Writes with both ends") as I retrace its topography and place-names. Another map drops into the winnowing basket. Eighty-five to go.

There have been no more than three words exchanged between me and another human in the last week. I exclude Hodge, who checks me out daily, no doubt on orders from above. When he finds me still working he gives me a glassy-eyed, six-pointed stare into which I read a savory mixture of repressed disappointment, boredom, impatience, condescension overlaid with a very slightly exaggerated air of

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courage in the face of insurmountable obstacles, Sydney Carton, Joan of Arc, this hurts me more than it does you especially in the pocketbook yet I go on unflinching but with the satisfaction of letting you know all this. He is justified—that is the horrible thing. *A* horrible thing.

Your letter was at least short. Your words of encouragement concerning the map made things so much easier for me. Does taunting me give you that great a satisfaction? Or do you not realize how harsh your words rings? Such as giving up the idea of "adherence." You are cruel to a generous nature, which has a tenders for you that makes your least ill-humor afflicting. My rock drying up? I only hope your vitriol will turn to Victory Oil—it sets the wheels turning all right, like an unquenchable hotfoot.

The library by now will have sent the Pannam microfilms. What do you want them for?

Here's the sun. I greet it with a camel yawn.

Now back to maps, eyes sharp, box those shadows, running in place breathless, stupid pursuit of that unfading wreath! When I think of those others, who heard of the treasure two weeks ago, and who will get more of it than I who have thought of nothing else and labored for over a year! Many will have been called and all chosen, except me.

Yesterday the Guest played macro-tennis with the Mayor. Next comes the bowling contest: jet-propelled steel balls and twelve-foot exploding pins. Boom boom!

Often I feel that if I could follow the workings of old Wittgenstein's mind, these puzzles would become clear.

LXXXII

February 20

The microfilms have arrived and I thank you. They fill personal needs.

"Prince Voltic has established a legal claim on the treasure." I say the words and will yet not believe.

It is true: Prince has a legal claim, and international, on the

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treasure. Bonzo show me the paper, that was deposited a year ago almost. Can it be possible? Is there some thing to do? For you also this shall mean an end?

My mind, my heart are shaking. For: it is necessity, that I am honest with the good Prince. Oh well, I make myself contemplate "renunciation" to dissipate the idea "greed". Have I not told you as such? so:

One following the Teaching does not harbor thoughts of desire (every sensual whatever it be) that may arise in her. But she avoids them, she tames them, she annihilate them. She does not harbor thoughts of rage or resentment, no, but she averts them, she tames them, she annihilates them!

It constitutes the perception of renunciation.

So as perhaps to help you, I have been at once reading the *Tractatus*. I fear my intellectual standard must be under below, I can't understand some thing when I read the plain words, over and over.

And that is that my understanding might follow some feeling of life which I can feel from the proses or verses, familiar to me. I have read late writers of your country, frequently I sense this feeling is a of loneliness and isolation of the modern man situation in a world of civilisation and technique, a feeling of depression but the trial to conquer it too. Such as Robinson Jefferson, as example.

I do not, though, read only the mods. Thus, in recent days I learn from Origen that on the Lost Judgment the blessed souls will roll into heaven, for they will be resuscitate in perfection, as spheres. Do the *Medici* think of this when they make their marks?

O water ruffled by strong wind! You, have omissed to set on your last letter its date.

So, remember: *Evvivano le palle!*

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LXXXIII*

Feb. 24

It is 3 A.M. I just returned home through streets full of maskers. It is our one masked night. The powers that be decided one is all we deserve.

I've found the map. It was forty-first from the end. I feel like both seed and fertile ground. That's speaking like a fool but if there is to be bravado I too can indulge in it, after this drudging. Fuck the Prince. No stumbles now!

I have here glued half a stick of Juicy Fruit gum (at three cents a stick) which is the greatest proof I can give you at present of being, with my whole heart, yours.

What the hell's Tractatus?

LXXXIV

February 27

Because you need to comprehend Wittgenstein I read the Tractatus, his early broad book, but not so bad, as you say.

Now every day Bonzo is pursuing the Prince, to negotiate with him, the map for a share of the treasure. I have told him, go very slow; so I don't know if yet they are talking gravy.

It makes me think, if I must eat many meals more in this *pensione* I shall go on a hunger stroke. However I have the luck that Bonzo buy me a meal nearly each evening.

And your map—it seems so far so fantasmal. Is it real? Is it really unreal? As I once said to you, things must disappear, and even so consciousness of them. Therefore, contemplating the consciousness as well as any thing (e.g. map), you are to think of it impermanent not permanent, miserable not happiness, impersonal not a personality—you are to feel aversion to it; take no pleasure from it; detach yourself of it; give it up.

Thus, you do not pile up *kamma*. For, we know this:

*Postcard.

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The act has no actor
And no one gather its fruit;
There is only the succession of empty phenomena.
Other than this no view is right.
And while acts and their honsequences succeed
In obedience to the law of causality
(As the tree follows the seed and the seed the tree)
No first beginning is perceptible.

Twang shall ask, send the mask you have wore.

LXXXV

March 3

Forgive my delay, caused by dicease in the family.

Mardi Gras is only two days off, thank God—no sooner had I found the map than I was ordered back to being watchman. The resulting exhaustion was a match for even my insomnia. Today's parade ended my duties.

It was a continuation of the one with which the festival began, and followed the Guest from the City Center, which he had then reached, to the waterfront.

I missed the start—it is supposed to have taken place in an atmosphere of high dedication, so high that Mayor Favell was unable to speak—because I was busy defending my vantage point. The only person in front of me was a petite lady cop in a magenta "spectator sportswear" uniform.

The street was a lively spectacle. The pavements were strewn with fresh laurel and honeysuckle. A pot of incense fumed on every traffic light. Above me a trio of Flügelhorns stood at a picture window and from time to time blew a peppy fanfare. From cornices and roofs smoke-machines uncoiled ropes of color, as did the hovering flares that so brighten our nights. The crowd flowed about the food-and-drink stands, which sent smells of fritters to my appreciative nose.

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The live shows scattered through the city had been moved to the tops of buildings along the parade route. I could see one of them: playing the legendary Willie Mays, a batter stroked baseballs in elegant parabolas over the rooftops.

From time to time the glider passed over head, stunning us with silence.

The parade began with seven groups of animals representing the continents. I noticed that Dex had leased some spares from the Temple: two razor-clawed avocado bears from Peru.

Then came various guilds, appropriately costumed. Among them were the designers of the festival, who got a big hand; lawyers (they carried a coffin-like mock-up of Blackstone); professional transvestites of both sexes who held up the parade with a squabble as to how the "Ladies first" principle should be applied.

They were followed by the succession of floats that is the pride of our festival.

First were the enigma floats: scenes depicting undisclosed proverbs. On the first, for instance, one saw a man with corked ears contemplating a sheet of music, while behind him a blindfolded girl, gesticulating skyward, vainly implored him to look where she was pointing. On the second, an old fellow in striped garb sat on a green platform surrounded by water, gazing toward the horizon past a sign that read, "Property of Lucifer." It wasn't hard to guess that the first float stood for "The blind cannot hear, nor the deaf see"; the second for "A colonial escape must be singly bred"; and the third, "The button leaves a mark of fear."

Next were the allegorical floats, giant figures and settings. It would take pages to describe them (they lasted two hours) but some titles were: The Big Number, The Assassinated President, Armed Peace.

Musical floats followed—brass bands, pop groups (one of whom sang the Mayor's verses to the newest Mrs. Favell) and a chorus performing in counterpoint the three hits of the carnival. In the soprano one heard "A Big Basket for Fruits," a presto tongue twister sung with miraculous ease; in the tenor,

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the languid melismas of "Trouble my Depths"; in the bass, "I may be Black, but I'm blue."

The dancers were next. The "Anatomy" floats are now peopled with mannequins: when they passed, only the Mirror Man flashed among the dummies. The other floats were live and various. On one, dancers spelled out the words of a significant text. It is hard to say how this was done, but it was done.

At the end came an animal dance, with llamas, elephants, kangaroos, and other charmers. They were followed by people dressed up as the same animals, performing the same dance.

Throughout the parade the Venusians carried out their antic role.

The cortege at last disappeared towards Miamarina. It was there, last night, that the guest won his final victory over the Black and white Mayors. He manned a jib crane set on a gantry running along two hundred yards of waterfront. In the cockpit of another crane, at the opposite end of the gantry, sat replicas of the Mayors. Charging towards each other, the cranes collided near the middle of the gantry with a bang that shook the suburbs. Six times the derricks clashed indecisively. At the seventh the Mayors' tipped sideways, fell into the harbor waters, and vanished. The Guest had justified his title of Chief Pilot.

It is at Miamarina that the festival will end. It has entered its final, aquatic stage, symbolizing instability and metamorphosis, preparing us for Lenten changes. The parade, when it reached the harbor, continued straight into the water. Floats, Venusians, and swimming animals joined the host of carnival participants already immersed: pilotless boats, "float-in" movies, trained squads of dolphins and fish, and swimmers finned-out as fish. Ordinary swimmers then began dipping into the chilly water. Later there will be boat races and battles, with prizes.

I visited the harbor in late afternoon. The thousands of swimmers made the scene worthy of D. W. Griffin. However, all filming is forbidden. No one in fact can keep any re-

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cord of the carnival, written, painted, photographed, or taped. The festive structures chosen for permanence are our only memorials.

The Guest's winning crane is to become the scaffold for the great bonfire of Tuesday night. It has been christened *thalamus* or marriage bed—Aphrodite's, because the water festival celebrates her birth from the waves. The crane has already been draped with an immense net, on which the population of our sinful town will abandon its "instruments of pleasure," everything from swizzle sticks to Kahlil Gibran.

Meanwhile the Guest, now Chief Pilot, his duties done, is to spend two days carousing with Miamians great and small. On Tuesday he will conspicuously join in the last wild dancing, kissing all the pretty girls he meets. At midnight he will unzip his mask and, casting it into the fire, reveal his identity.

The time will also be given over to public confession, in these circumstances a joyful and salutary experience. The Festival Directors have been accused of organizing these confessions, but the reproach is unfair. They are absolutely spontaneous, and are organized only to make sure someone is listening.

The last confession is the Guest's avowal of his name.

I myself must "confess," dear one, that my map is as real as an Easter egg. I find it to say the least puzzling that you question its existence—methinks my Twang no longer trusts her Zachary. Or is this more Buddhist theory? What about "your" map? How can you negotiate with it—do you expect me to send you a copy?

Of course, theoretically, you are right: knowledge will undoubtedly vanish away. Meanwhile I have the map and I want its "fruits," the whole and palpable knowledge of it, before it and I return to the burning fountain. I have no desire to sit out my life like a blind beggar on the roadside.

For the first time in months I feel sanguine about my future. I've seen that Mr. Dharmabody is properly boarded. My *kas* are in good shape. So, out of the desert and into the sea. Wednesday morning will see me and the others headed for Key Betabara.

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Ah, the *Tractatus*—by Wittgenstein I meant Charlie Wittgenstein, who used to rope for the Locus Solus kid. His specialty was "finding the leather."

Check enclosed.

LXXXVI

March 6

Yes, it's indeed my own map offered to the Prince. Bonzo has done this so well, and the Prince says Of course, since I must use it to find that treasure which is mine, part of that can be yours. So it is done! Not your untrust yet unbelief confuse me, me-think your mind is of water-veiled-with-mosss, for I six weeks ago have told you of the desired dockument that is in *Mediceo Avanti il Principato*.

Now Bonzo and I have made a certain agreedment and to honor it he has at last take me to his fatherly house, and there through many obsolutely fine rooms, like the autobus station! And he asks, Shall we visit my dear the Averardo Room, I thought he say avocado with in mind your charmer bears; but, Averardo.

It is very nice too, for histerical reason! I have meant, that is only a storoom attic, not eleghant as others, not used much, with such dust one was needing a lot of broom for manoever. But very interesting. There were fine very plain chests, for the chairs are mostly sold with the Prince, a cross was on one, plain too but plainly renaissance (15th c.), a Roman coin was there. We opened one very large chest, there were the Medici *palle* (Balls) on the lid, and on the inside stuff also, when Bonzo opens the lid, Oh so heavy and slow—the floor of that room was wide board—there were seventeen small windows, I shall say 120 cm × 80 cm—the beams of the ceiling were painted with the same color as the plaster between, pinkish cream—some black cracking went along them—on the walls were a so-so so-so "Woman at the Marketplace." A 19th century tapestry of a railroad train, very holy. *La Tolleranza Tradita*, by Unknown.

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Often I say, concentrate on detachment to crack up the hardnut thought "covet."

Well, did you know our marriage is not legal in Italy?

Thinking of your letter from *Lionetto de' Rossi*, I renote this from *Lorenzo the Mag.* to him, writing of the treasure. He *Lorenzo* say that he has not yet tried before to sell it because it is so notorious but now he's short of cush and want the gold negotiated quickly and discreetly. So, he will send it abroad. It will come in a box of old brocade where it is still since *Cosimo* tried to send it away through Pisa. It is so old brocade that "the silver marks at the end of its bolts truly now look alike black crows." He says it is 500 *bracci* long. He promises to let *Lionetto* know, when it will arrive. "I promise to tell you, when it will arrive."

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Part Seven

LXXXVII

Early Thurs.

Back yesterday evening, up all night. The events have left me feeling like a fragment by H. D. It was absolutely an awful time. I'm going to have a banana and a swallow of Epsom salts then get into bed and weep sore. The sun, about to emerge, can pursue it's magnetic way without me.

LXXXVIII

March 8

This business seems to completely have fallen through. I can't tell how. The breach is beyond repair. I expect no redeeming event, but would like an explanation. Eschatological tensions rend my bones, unsoothable subintestinal knots! and you will soon be berating me I know it, and not wrongly, don't go easy, bray what a fool I've been. But tell me first if your map (I do believe it) looks like this;

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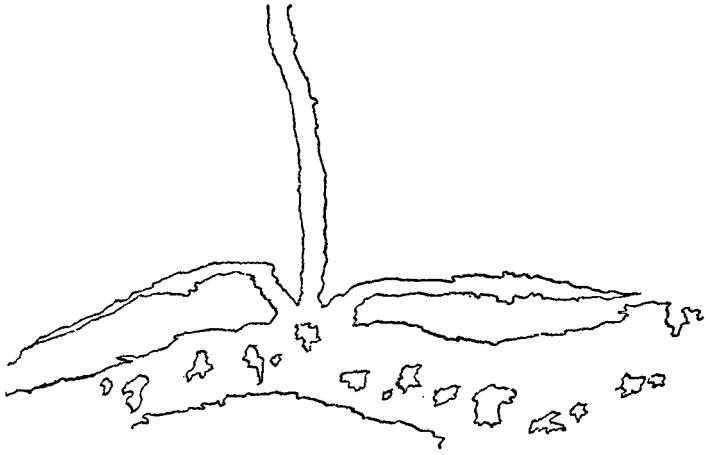

(Somewhat like my voice-print when my voice say "eye.")

We left Wednesday. The morning was clear, the town quiet. The unmasked Guest had "rescued Aphrodite" at midnight, and before dawn the two of them had boarded a rocket to be shot into space. Through empty streets a girl's cool voice broadcast the Lenten proclamation that forbids "blasphemy, games, sodomy, concubinage, renting houses to panders..." Hodge, in charge of the expedition, directed my driving. To make sure we were free of tags, we meandered through back streets before taking the highway to the gulf. At Naples I turned south on a secondary road, stopping after two miles by a weedy graveyard, our rendezvous. We settled down to wait for our partners. After twenty minutes a car slowly approached. From it stepped two uncommunicative men, nondescript for their reputed standing; perhaps they were, like Hodge, mere delegates.

Our boat was at a marina five miles to the south. It was ready; we set off at once. We plunged into the labyrinth of inshore channels bordering that coast. Hodge and the captain used an enlargement of my map, discussing locations in the Ten Thousand Islands to which it might correspond. It was then I learned that we were not in fact going to Key Betabara. We were looking for our treasure after all, but it was in some other, unknown place. Hodge acknowledged this. I felt

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reality slipping a little farther from my grasp.

Hours passed in slow search. The configurations of the map approximated many sites but coincided with none. The coast and shores turned from sand to mud to other-colored sand. Flat clusters of mangrove and palmetto accumulated monotonously. Hodge became sour and a little frantic. I found myself cheering him up, busying him with questions, like the idiot in Grimm distracting the witch from her pills. Our companions somnolently fished from the stern.

Occasionally we saw other boats, or glimpsed tourists along the shore roads, but for the most part the landscape was deserted. It was with some astonishment that, exploring a channel that resembled a detail of the map, and issuing into a cove or, more properly, a well-protected estuary tallying with the map in every particular, we found that the island at its center—our very goal—was a nudist camp.

As we approached and cut our engines, an old man started shouting at us from the water's edge.

Hodge grunted irritably. "That's the resort director—harmless. This is Key Mingori. If I'd known, we could have saved half the day." Sunset was near.

The old man had a mane of white hair. Erect in spite of his years, he looked, with his short staff, very Stan Musialesque. He wore an open jerkin embroidered with shells and thorny roses. Something in his manner suggested that he was expecting us. I wondered if one of our agents had alerted him, but decided that my suspicions were due to his lack of beard.

As we came ashore he concluded his diatribe, of which I only grasped the final sentence:

"The black men shine redder than your moth-eaten gold!"

At our approach he raised his fingers to his eyes, which were obscured by gray cataracts. Adroitly he flicked them away, and put on orange sunglasses.

This old man was Mitchell Mauss. He has been famous among the local Indians ever since the tribe with which he was living was stricken with epidemic diptheria. Mauss taught them a technique of deep yawning to tear the suffocating diphtherial growths, saving many children. The tribe

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rewarded him with the gift of the Key.

Mauss developed the island as a small resort. His clients are shy nudists—people who believe in nudism but find difficulty practicing it, and who are fearful of ordinary colonies with their requirements of strict nakedness. On Key Mingori nudity is only encouraged, never enforced, in accordance with inner needs.

Mauss welcomed us and, despite the late hour, insisted we tour his establishment. He presented it as a very moral community. There were beggars stationed in inconspicuous spots, hidden by richly ornate screens "so that donors would not feel unjustified superiority"; in a recess of the shore he showed us a vast submarine corral filled with sea beasts—"A gam of milk whales," he explained. "But we don't milk them now, because they're fasting—yes, fasting. It's for our benefit. The knowledge of their privation fills us with remorse whenever we eat. Whereas if we ourselves fasted we might fall prey to smugness." At our approach many a square snout had risen from the agitated water.

Opposite our boat stood an old, sickly palm tree, A rusty pie dish was wedged in its upper branches. Underneath, traced in faint disjointed pencil strokes, drawings of Alpine scenes were clipped to the fronds; and close to the ground an iron cross, perhaps the shank and stock of an anchor, protruded from a gray scar in the trunk (almost fell down, said nothing of course.) To a ring in the cross, two thick ropes, one long, one short, leashed dissimilar creatures: a young woman who slithered in the powdery sand, combing her hair with a sea urchin, naked except for an anal star; and a huge, unmoving boa, whose body coiled around a driftwood log.

A young man stepped up and declared in a shaky voice, "This is a private club." The director reassured him. To us, touching the snake's eyes, he said, "He's afraid. Don't you be."

The young man had risen from a group that was seated in rows on the ground. It was watching television programs on five sets arranged in quincunx—

The doorbell's dinging, maybe that's news!!

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LXXXIX

March 8

Now, just, I have had a police visit. The three men came to my room, all say *Ciao!* loud at once, and look every place —under the bed they do not need to bend they are so stumpy! They say (good English), What's this? What's that? Watch out! "Scandalous prodigality of rush wealth" and so funny threats. I acted bewhildered—I *was* so; and proclaimed my innoncence. They go.

No more to write now, for I shall telephone the Pindola to ask him what this intruding meant.

But I forgot to tell, that your beautiful description of carnival's final was appreciated to no end, etc.

I must also calm myself, so: "thinking of wretchedness against ideas of affection and clinging."

Now, I'm calmer. Perhaps I saw those policemen some time else? Yet I take it for granite they are real.

XC

Continued March 9

The doorbell was a mistake.

There was this X-shaped arrangement of television sets. Three commercials, Ben Gazzara's twentieth dying year, and a quiz program emceed by Mr. Hood.

Hodge shouted out to the boat, "Bring the tools." Tools meant picks, shovels, guns.

He was leaning against the dessicated palm. Mauss said, "That cross *looks* so old," rubbing his hand over one rusted knob. "What salt air does in a few years!" Hodge glanced at him. Mauss continued: "If the old Spaniards had put it there, how high would it be now? As high as the pie dish?"

Hodge's disappointment was so plain he almost looked human. I groaned in sympathy.

Mauss said, "I remember one big palm, about ten miles south, with a cross sticking out twenty-five feet up. Some-

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where around Key Isabella, hard to say exactly with all those mangroves. A cove like ours..."

Without a word Hodge turned toward the boat. I stopped to mumble our thanks. On the television screen Mr. Hood was presenting two hundred thousand dollars to the quiz winner, the Miami chief of police. Mauss went over and switched that set to another channel.

I heard engines start. Our boat had weighed anchor. I ran towards the water, shouting hopelessly in the growling dusk.

An Indian nudist appeared, brandishing a feeble torch: the boat turned back. He led me through the shallows and supported my swim with a strong scissors kick.

Safely aboard, I watched my benefactor return to shore. It was nearly dark. Above the Gulf unseasonable lightning glimmered like a defective bulb. Supersonic bats, popping like corks, issued for their nocturnal hunt.

Over the engine noise Hodge was shouting his contempt for Mauss's colony: "...Back to square one.... Substandard realty for the dissolute...." He was his repulsive self again. However, he dried me off kindly. I would have preferred plain signs of his evil heart; but you can't expect a suffragette to grow whiskers.

We anchored off Key Isabella for the night. I hardly slept. Around midnight one of the partners emerged from his apathy to start cleaning the firearms, which he said were in an appalling state. The night passed in clicks and shocks.

At sunrise we resumed our search. The day began fair, but by eight o'clock a fog thicker than Mogen David wine had clapped down on us. We persevered until noon, staring into the beclouded branches of every passing grove. The captain finally announced that search was futile in such conditions—we would return to port. We inched our way into the gulf, headed north, and docked at five.

Our partners went their way. When Hodge and I reached Miami, he reminded me that Mr. Hood was waiting for news. I suggested telephoning. Hodge was adamant: "Can't cross the old man."

In his office Mr. Hood was having drinks with three gentle-

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men of opulent mien. He introduced them as our principal associates. One of them was known to me from Spindle gatherings.

Hodge reported the failure of our search and recommended that we start out again as soon as the weather cleared. Mr. Hood seemed disappointed and, even more, perplexed. He politely asked Hodge for a full account. Hodge said that he would draw up a report in the morning. An ice-pick note entered Mr. Hood's voice as he insisted, still courteous, that he and his partners learn what had happened. Until then I had scarcely listened. Abruptly, through fatigue and depression, terrible suspicion surged. Were things not as they seemed?

Mr. Hood was watching Hodge with an appalling, predatory stare.

Hodge began recounting our trip in wearying detail. Often he turned to me for corroboration, which I cautiously supplied. As he described our visit to the island I saw him stop in amazement. Mr. Hood had risen from his chair and stood shaking his smooth hands at Hodge. He was white. One reads of people going white but I had never seen it happen. Mr. Hood was the color of wet plaster.

"So that's it!" he said, his voice thrillingly quiet. "Do you expect me to buy that, you cheap hood?"

Grasping the arms of his chair, Hodge blustered, "Who do you think you're talking to?"

"'*Whom* do you think you're talking to'! Now, don't tell me you spent thirty years with the papes and never learned how God made a tree." Mr. Hood turned to us. "Don't you see his game? When you drive a nail into a tree trunk, it stays put, and an iron cross is no different. It wouldn't climb as the tree grows. He's in cahoots with Mauss. By now the treasure's in the Bahamas, the whole eight million. You fink! You despicable fink!"

Mr. Hood crossed the room and slapped Hodge's face (since the latter was seated, it was on a level with his own.) Hodge rose and began strangling his tiny adversary. This is the last thing I saw clearly. Purplish smoke seemed to fill the room. I yelled, "He's ruined me, he's ruined me" and I threw

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myself at Hodge. I was ready to kill him. The others pulled me back. Hodge, himself in a fury, again lunged at Mr. Hood, who had scrambled behind his desk. I wanted to stop him but there was no need for that. I barely glimpsed the silvery pistol in Mr. Hood's hand as he shot Hodge point blank. Hodge gave an ugly groan, turned toward me, and a jet of hot slick blood spurted from his mouth over my shirt. Then he collapsed face downwards.

Mr. Hood acted with dispatch. He searched Hodge's pockets and found the enlargement of the map. "Where's the original?" he asked. I gave him the ancient document, which tore where the blood had soaked it. "Burn them, they're evidence," he ordered. One of the men wrapped the maps in newspaper, set a match to the bundle, and dropped it into a metal wastebasket.

"Now we'd better lam it." He said to me, "I'll take you home, you can clean up there." To the others: "Gentlemen, stay here until I can dispose of the body. No one must enter. I'm sorry you're involved, but we must work together now to make sure our names are not associated with this hoodlum or his death—even if it's an obvious case of self-defense."

The men agreed. They were stunned by the violence. Mr. Hood took me down a back elevator to the parking lot, where his car and chauffeur were waiting. It was late; we drove through empty streets. Mr. Hood saw me to and through my door.

"Don't budge till you hear from me. I'll take care of everything." Then, with a smile sad but warm, squeezing my hands in his:

> "...If thou art rich, thou'rt poor;
> For like an ass whose back with ingots bows,
> Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a journey
> And death unloads thee."

He has been my only consolation in these grim hours.

I feel sick, sick, and never so alone. Alone, and vulnerable, in spite of Mr. Hood. The police will come straight here for

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me. I feel conspicuous as a flying elephant. I have no energy, no confidence, and no glimmer of comprehension.

But why tell you how I feel? There was nothing but you to give hope, and now I guess there is not even you. Without your strength and thought I would never have undertaken this and now you have deprived me of them. It's unpleasant to blame you, but who else is there to blame for the wasted days and nights, the wasted money and the expense of emotion? I beg for help and you answer nothings. Here's a check for what's worth.

XCI

March 12

It is very sad, Twang sends you much thoughtful strength for your trouble, but then I have such: the policemen are sent after me by an American the Mr. P. Asher, who bought last December that cameo. It was false! I telephoned the Prince and he said, "Ssh! Nothing to say on the telephone, come." He already knows. It is so bad for everyone of us, so that he, and Bonzo, and I, and all are about to fall into disgrace or jail. It seems, there is no way out as if they had surrounded us with rollers of bobbed wire!—but the Prince "will do all he cans."

I shall answer one question here, saying that the two maps are the very same. But do you see, it does not matter? (Because the treasure is a belonging of the Prince Voltic, wherever it is found, or lost.) Not a matter anynow.

And I think for Twang, for Zachary too, to remember: perceive evil and suffering, think of them collapsing the stupid idea happiness. And:

Stillness within, knowing:

Suffering exists, but no sufferer
Action exists, although no actor
Extinction, but not one in the least who dies
Although there is a Way there is no wayfarer

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(And to face them I have not even any pretty clothes, just just these old hateful ones.)

XCII

March 14

This has been a day of varied emotions, bringing as it did my ma's will and accounts of her death.

There has been no published news of Hodge's murder.

My mother died last Wednesday, while I was mucking through the fogs. She had recently fallen ill, as I wrote you. (You did not find this worthy of comment.) Her death was therefore not unexpected, but no less terrible, especially as I could not attend her last hours. She was a perfect woman, "glory and beauty went before her." She must have been disappointed in me, her only son. She never however showed anything but affection. Thank God she didn't live to see me in court. The mother ate sweet grapes, and the son's teeth fell out.

She was buried today and I drove down for the funeral. Mr. Hood would not let me go sooner. In his tactful way he even tried to dissuade me from making the trip at all. He finally agreed to it and ended by coming with me! It was a godsend having him there. There were moments, such as when I beheld my coffined mother in her beloved pearls and shawl, in which collapse was near, and at those times Mr. Hood straightened me up with a word or look. He was a comfort to everyone and made a strong impression. Diana thought he was a doctor.

The funeral was ghastly. It's true that my other (and I admit greater) anguish may have deformed what I saw. Everybody behaved as if they were menstruating. It might have been a snake that was being buried. It is degrading that a woman so generous and cheerful should be a pretext for such meanness.

On the drive back tonight I asked Mr. Hood what he meant when, just before the blood flowed, he referred to Hodge's

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"years with the papes." Mr. Hood replied that for most of his life Hodge had been a Jesuit priest. I couldn't believe it. I said that Hodge was as unlike a Jesuit as possible, witness his latest hairdo. Mr. Hood said, "That's why he was called the Invisible Jesuit. You were looking at a Jesuit but you couldn't see him."

Miami in Lent is deader than an empty gin bottle; I am the fly inside it. Mr. Hood tells me to be patient. He visits at least twice a day—his concern is amazing. He is chary of news, probably out of discretion. He says we're getting the breaks: no doubt he's making them.

I have taken out protractor and compass to try and collate my sketchy copy with the real life maps of the Geodesic Survey. They never quite match.

It is uncertain what the police are doing. Mr. Hood may have arranged matters or perhaps they are being clever. They can issue John and Jane Doe warrants and fill in the names at the moment of arrest.

Thank you for your frequent and sympathetic letters.

XCIII

March 14

Yesterday again I saw the Prince. (It was near bath-time, and he appeared in a down-to-the-floor lamé bathing robe, and with eighteen curl springs in his hair. He is, I guess, so queer as the three dollar coot.) Oh, he is good, and great. Perhaps those curlers were mastery by suspension, pushing away the five hindrances by metal concentration, as a jar tossed upon moss-covered water split the slime. He had decided, to take every responsability for himself: and we shall go free from peril. It is not a foolish way; for "justice will stick to the biggest stick." I gush my thanks. He almost cried, saying no more can we ever meet. Generous man! Of course I give him Medici papers, map and explanations, anything that may help him in his battle.

It is so lovely, that in this situation everbody from the

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Prince down has been one hundred per cent. Thus can Twang practice the contemplation of high intelligence to shake away the idea of material attachment, that dump of ice.

So you too should find such a discipline, notably after this disgusting slaying of which you write. Also I find it a degradation, that you copy insults out of your old letters to me!

XCIV

March 15

Bonzo and I have escaped Florence, we shall go to Lerici for a long hide-out. I think much of the idea of extinction to erase the consciousness of ever having been born. For

if mental actions are the result of ignorance
and consciousness is the result of mental actions
and name and shape are the result of consciousness
and six-sensual action is the result of name and shape
and contact is the result of six-sensual action
and feeling is the result of contact
and desire is the result of feeling
and affection is the result of desire
and becoming is the result of affection
and birth is the result of becoming:
suffering is the result of birth

We are spending the night in Lucca, charming renaissance city waiting for the next flood.

XCV

March 18

Saddened by news of the mother's death, Twang has climbed to the cemetery of this town Lerici, to think with you. Now, after tears, my dear Zachary, I must remind you life is nothing. Were you so attached to your mother? You,

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also are subject to death, already. With or without this attachment to her, you are dying. It would be better, my friend, to disengage yourself. It was better, to think of your dead mother as you would think while looking at a cadaver, if you worked in a crematorium.—Some objects of contemplation for repulsion:

A corpse two or three days old, blackish-blue, it is decomposing; a corpse picked by cows; a carcass of bones hanging with blood-sputtered flash, which worn muscles hold together; bones—dessevered, whitened like shells, piled in piles, crumpling from exposure, falling to dust. Then: "My body is of this type, has this fate."

It is called also the perception of instability. Impermanence even in the moss on these grave stones among which i sit to write, the sad sunny wind, the hungry cats among the dooms.

I am in some despair also. The little town, the little life, is empty, except for fear. This morning as I awoke I see old curtains, old glasses, and the empty dish. I am ah thankful for Bonzo, here, it is nothing other.

I remember another say, say

> Thinking of the cessation of desire I breathe in,
> Thinking of the cessation of desire I breathe out,

again; again.

Of course it is only an example, this word "desire".

XCVI

March 19

Just saw Hodge, alive and kickable. Was close to breakdown, staying in day after day, so went to eat at the former Nova Luna, a dyke bar on Scheherazade Blvd., now an Armenian restaurant called Leander's Hideaway. Enjoying a succulent grunt-kebab when in walked the visible Hodge. He had a drink at the bar and left; after which the barman confirmed his identity. I wish someone would confirm mine.

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Unable to reach Mr. Hood by phone, now awaiting his visit to pass on the dire news.

Could you send copy of your map? I hope you made a copy?

I am rather dead. Also suffer (paradoxically?) from epithelial oversensitivity. Couldn't shave for days, water is fiery as rum, etc. Underneath, soft anesthesia of desperation: the shock seeing Hodge a distant one, a sonic bang from overseas. You notice I didn't move. (Should have shot him properly!) Less distraught by him than by fear of being caught by somebody from the library—have been on sick leave. Yet must quit that job. The derangement is certainly worsened by so much solitude. When I asked Mr. Dharmabody to please pass the salt I realized things were bad. Later I hitted him. I hope he's too old for me to infect him with my neuroses. His looks embody my my feelings, with black-ringed eyes and straggly hairs. I find no pleasure in his sight.

XCVII

March 23

It has become impossible to tell whether it is worse hearing or not hearing from you.

Mitchell Mauss has been arrested for theft of a treasure trove, by law the property of the state of Florida.

Mr. Hood did not come the day of Hodge's re-emergence, nor the day after. On the morning of the 21st his three bodyguards appeared at the door. They were subdued, barely whispering their unison "Hello there!" They handled me a large envelope. The map was in it—the map I had seen burn. Also a note from Mr. Hood. The partnership was being dissolved, because of danger. Contributions to the expedition were being refunded, less profits already paid: $2,200 - $2,170 = $30. Hodge was best forgotten, "victim of the cackle bladder." The whole affair should be forgotten. We had been misled. The map was of no value. The treasure had never reached these shores.... At the end: "Zachary, you're a nice

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man. Take my advice and pretend it was a dream."

Before there was time to show my feelings, which if my present existence were not posthumous might have been lion-like rage, the three of them rattled off an antiphonal midrash or mishmash warning me that I was liable to prosecution for stealing state property (the map), and reminding me that Mr. Hood was on the best terms with the chief of police.

That night the hair fell out all over my body. I am denuded from crown to sole. I might have foreseen this. I have felt as though some unknown law were being written into my vitals with a drill; this is its public form. I shall next grow scales.

Mr. Hood is not to be found. His house is boarded up. His office has not closed, it has disappeared. The space is occupied by a simulated-pearl distributor who claims to have been there for years. I cannot think of anyone who could testify to the contrary.

There is little left in my shrunken world. Your neglect (contempt?) has turned books into blank papers, friends into [*illegible*]. It appears I shall have neither savory meat nor blessing. Perhaps I am to be the fatted calf. Unfatted: these worries have revealed many a bone. The thyroid may be affected.

My depression is thck as a chocolate brownie. A cackle bladder is a little rubber bag filled with chicken blood and held in the mouth. Bitten into, it shoots the blood forth.

XCVIII

March 28

Indeed, there is no hope in that world of yours. It would be best to believe Mr. Hood, Forget. This, and that. For you are attached to deviation, and this has made you a pariah. Remember, it is not by birth that one becomes a pariah, but by acts.

So you have acted: when most gently crossed, you fall into

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anger, screaming, etc. Look at Bonzo—humbled for years by the women whose hands he must shine, often by the Prince, and life, yet is ready always for more. It rouses atrocious feeling in me when I think of your way. And now even water annoys you so your hair is falling!

Also you have acted: the sorriest occasion is an excuse for you to put forward your lust. Our nights together, always you slide to my side of the bed; later you ask me to write dirty letters; and so forth. And Bonzo—true, he did that first attack but since, look at him: nights and days with Twang, and he still waits. I start to find him rather sexy!

You act as if your heart were a tiger's, you kick away my questions, my thoughts and all my sentiments, and you claw at friends with hate. As for Bonzo if he sees one eye of mine opening he strains to guess its desire. You wish to shoot Hodge. Know that they who would shoot will be shot!!

Is it then a surprise that I shall want to forsake a pariah of such irritability, sensuality, and cruelty, and marry the mild man Bonzo?

We must remain here until the danger pass. I would prefer you do not write. Later, I shall tell you what is to happen. Three nights ago there was a fire in one section of the Laurenziana, I suppose you have read this in the newspaper? Many private citizens bravely rushed in to help evacuate the rare archives.

XCIX

Why not the whole truth? Surely you no longer care about its effect on me. You need only admit it. This is no attempt to convince you of anything, or to judge. You are beyond the pale of judgment—at least of civilized humanity—among Tartars you might get a hearing.

Nearly a year ago a first suspicion slithered through my brain, and was sent scurrying. In your letter of July 3, "Who is Montpellier?" you naïvely asked. Yet on May 12 you had written of Messer Todao's house in Montpellier. You will

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remember those words, these very words, you who forget nothing?

This was the scheme. That gang knew that we librarians had access to the Donation maps. What better prospect among them than a middle-aged bachelor slob? So Mr. Tittle, agent of the highly respected International Red Arrow and my "accidental" traveling companion, collared me on my flight east to plant the first information in my unsuspecting head; and in Bangkok he delivered me into your irresistible care. I was solidly hooked, "marrage" wiped away all doubt, and you bravely agreed to work alone in strange cities on our behalf. I passed into the hands of Hodge, whom I met as I had met you, at the initiative of a stranger. You urged me to frequent him, to take up his proposition, after which I was propelled into dreamy Spindledom. Whenever I was calm enough to be capable of reason, you inflamed me with harrying news—Bonzo Pindola's assault, your frequentation of him, your ill-treatment by the Prince, all communicated in the certainty that knowing you alone in a foreign land was torture to me. Meanwhile your refusal to punish Pindola started the long fuse of jealousy smoldering through the burrows of my mind. I was tantalized with reports about the no doubt fictitious Salvestro to convince me of your zeal; and with your arsenical Buddhist moralizations which, when you ran out of affectionate phrases, were to prove your devotion. Finally you engineered the catastrophe of our transatlantic non-meeting, probably without leaving Tuscany; thus exhausted, I was lured into the unlikely partnership with Hood. They got the map from me. They certainly have the treasure. And they means you.

Isn't this the truth rather more than less? Isn't it the work of your desire?

As for the things you mention, we will forget them, if you please. I have no wish to remember them. If there is evil in me it will not be learned from your crusted tongue.

More last words, not many. I don't expect an answer, it doesn't matter, you will at least hear me. I expect you want to complete your revenge on me. I do not need to learn that

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an incensed woman is dangerous. You have already made chaos of my dull globe. My ego is like a torn kleenex. But do whatever seems most delightful. Our marriage isn't binding here either, thank you, so go right ahead with Banjo. Only it must be said that I have loved you as old men love the sun—I repeat this, since resentments leave only half-recollections, I have loved you beyond any wish for life or death—it is something I would not want you to forget, the merest jewel for your left claw.

C

7 Pok Laï

Piu Lemu! lemö vin maï uüax pristwi. Theu mau neng, wey tharaï duvaï. Wuc Lao stheu atran, ticbaï maï slop, naï: theu sheenö laï nob lucri nam aïndap. (eels)

CI

This chump never blowed you were turned out to hop-scotch. You let him find the leather, and he copped you for the pure quill, when you're nothing but a crow. It took a long time to bobble him but now you've knocked him good and he feels like a heavy gee had slipped him a shiv. Well, no twist will ever beat this savage again, not if she hands over her bottom bumblebee—it's cheaper loaning cush to Pogy O'Brien. Don't you play the hinge but stick to the big con. You're a class raggle with a grand future, even if this mark knows you're snider.

CII

April 10

Dear Doctor de Roover,

it has been very long, since I had the pleasures of lunching with you or Mrs. de Roover. I have not, however, forgot

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how much your help. I have thought, you shall like to know if I found anything out about that treasure *dei trè sciarrani?* Yes.

You will remember your intelligence of Otto di Guardia's hoard and the clipping; later, your great guess, Averardo had that bastard son whom then I could discover (Salvestro Sguardofisso.)

I suspected that treasure, its going to America; yet only suspect; then learned (two sources), on the chest were three perch "crudely carved", by Nicola Pisano. By Nicola Pisano, never! Crudeness and his name cannot mix. It was plain, that chest was false. Yet was it thought, was it meant to be thought, true? I have wondered, who saw the very gold, but in Florence? Nobody. Only the silk wrapping, I will tell you about it soon. Next I learned that Averardo accuses Giovanni de Bicci of taking Mr. Todao's riches in *bags*. Later Cosimo wrote Francesco di Neroni, about its markings: on the chest, on the wrappings, were *i segni familiari*, the family emblem, thus balls not fish. The name *trè sciarrani* stuck only as a memory of the first, fish chest.

Cosimo has the treasure in his Florentine palace, but too notorious to use, and Salvestro watching. Cosimo hides the clippings in a chest of silks. He asks Francesco di Nerone to export it; no mention of gold. Then Salvestro tells, and the plot fail through.

Again the treasure sits in the palace. Useless, but they will not yield it to Salvestro. Did they fear he'd claim pictures, land, jewels, banks, anything? They feared he was Piero's son! (The slave mother had just been in Piero's employ.)

In 1465 Salvestro is entirely their enemy, joins in the great conspiracy. In exile, after, he frightens them; then leaves Italy.

It is 1480. Lorenzo de' M. is short of money: he will sell the clippings, in Lyons. And he makes the plans for this with Lionetto de' Rossi. But in the next year new luck comes to him. The family shuts the costly bank in Venice. The Medici are welcome back in Rome, some pope's debts are paid. Those political "reforms" start to work, the state of Florence is lapsing between his hands with the public monies. His plan changes.

I learned this from one unscrambled bag of MAP—have you yet reached it? There was the correspondance between Lionetto and Lorenzo of those years. The letters before were known only from Lyons (Harvard). One of Lionetto complains that a chest of silk is not

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full, hurry with the rest. In this copy, after the place he would signs, there is an addition. It reads, how happy that the gold has "escaped its ultramontane destiny." Look! this is not what it seems, it is no part of the letter but of Lorenzo's answer, that I have found. Has Lionetto copied it there for the fact, as a signal of disappointment, of irony? I shall not know; but the meaning of "ultramontane" is France not Italy. The treasure did not move. Yet that word became evidence of its coming to France.

Many already believed this. Lionetto started the lie. You remember he was then badly straitened. He wanted so much to sell the treasure, restoring his assets. Now I hope I shall make you happy, and you can fit a new paragraph in your book (p. 301). Lionetto sent two balance sheets to Florence, one confused to the manager Sassetti, one clear to Lorenzo. You have wondered why, and I tell you: Sassetti did not know the plan of selling, and must be beguiled. Lionetto hoped the true account would make Lorenzo help. It did not. But Lionetto decided to act as if his wish had been granted.

By this time he had excited some buyers. He told the immensity of the treasure, also its distinctive signs: three fish carved on the chest, ravens stamped on the wrappings. (False! never ravens, only the Medici balls agains. Those birds were hatched from Lionetto's misreading Lorenzo's words, they were that the markings on the silk are so tarnished they "truly resemble black crows.")

Lionetto sold some chest to the sixth Abbot of Montpelas. He was foolish and paid a gold price for taffeta. After a repose in the abbey, this chest was carried to the new world, with its reputation still glowing. I can tell you its American history, when you so ask.

The gold lay in Florence. Lorenzo had decided to melt it down later, "with strenuous precautions of secrecy" (Memorandum to Sassetti, MAP Filza 34, No. 344; no mention in the *libro segreto*.) It was never done.

When the Medici were expelled in 1494, the new government let the mob plunder their palace, it was "sacked from roof to cellar." But in that mob, calm, came the Pindolas, rich oilmongrels, attached to the Averardo clan. Salvestro's father had bound them to be loyal to his bastard, and they helped him. During his exile they sheltered his mother, and departing from Italy he charged them with this final task. They should recover certain possessions "close to my heart, albeit modest

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in their worth." These had been part of his inheritance, seized by Cosimo, so he said, kept by his successors. Salvestro breathed no word of the gold. During the sack the Pindolas retrieved these things and took them to their house until Salvestro's return. They remained there, undisturbed until last year, when a few were sold. The chest, full of rotted silk, did not move. Now it is journeying forth from the scholarly realm, and my account must end.

I hope you had no trouble from that fire at the Laurenziana. Other friends were I think both burned and arrested.

May these pages have pleased you, dear Doctor de Roover! If you so desire, I shall send the exact sources. Convey my expressions of unforgetful friendship to your wife.

Sincerely Yours,

Tro-tsi Twang Panattapam McCaltex

CIII*

April 13

Zachary! I understand! One letter lost! Not the *i* in "marriage"! But this blue secret one, quick read it, only now it came back to me, for I sent it from the "General Delivery, Florence", and last week I wrote them for mail coming when I am in Lerici and here (Genova)—look on it, they have marked redly "not authorized enclosure"—it is my own, Twang's sprig of rosemary that had brought it back for more stamps, but why should I return to that post office, it is the sprig I sent from my very window pot that has poisoned the time. I have thought in late weeks, he is acting his part very well for the spies, even: is it truth? a little only, my Zachary, for that is more than I can think long without dying. Today this letter comes, not until today because of the strike patterns, and before when I wake up—I came into a hotel in the first mountains, for their sweet air—I have seen a daisy, a tardy orange, a cow: I ask, what joy will come upon me? It is you. I can

*Special delivery. Letter of January 3 attached.

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understand, and you shall not be lost! Oh I admist that the tears stream down my cheeks. It is as that which was tumbled is raised or what was hidden is unclosed, some yellow rose, like the right road pointed to she who was lost or a light brought into the dark for those who have eyes to see. Yes my cheeks are wet. Come to wipe them with that torn kleenex. Not as that other trip then I believed you must have the softest brain! Because you write "dictionary" and "Pogy O'Brien", that is some accident, and you think the lies I composed for them are true, I have such miseries inflicted on you it is not to be thought about. Now it shall be new, and today the New Year starts in my country, I say Happy New Year and this and all other that ever I shall speak to you is true. True as it can be born, wrapped in kindness of love, for in these lying letters I have said some real things, I thought, I shall not waste all the time I shall tell him of our believes and thus my short course in Buddhism but not meant so cruel, indeed there is truth in my words over your mother, whom I bewept so, I must flee into the graveyard, yet it was from my shame to have never kissed the hands of her who gave you into the world and this, is selfishness; however I would not have spoken with that cruel written tone. Never! my Zachary.

There's too much, to tell now, together I shall tell everything, we can smile and weep about all that. But some explanation—for instance the treasure was always here! That story about the abbot, and Amortonelli, that was crazy to me, then I think, you are fascinated by the intellectual problem viz. map, but Twang think rightly: cash. And other mistakes —*familiari* only meaning "family", and sacks bearing the treasure, and *torcere* not to "throw" the gold only wrap it, as many did in that historical period when the exchange rates were bad, and the crows on the brocade, a stupidity of Lionetto and making for me early suspicion because when I hunted through all the timely papers there were crowns, crosses, croziers but never crows! There were only ever the Medici *palle*, their balls as in the shout *Evvivano le palle!* so I write this cry but it misses you. No the treasure was always in Casa Pin-

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dola and that day Bonzo showed me the remainder of the Averardo heritance when I saw the old silk I have a pulse of about eight hundred, and he saw nothing. He believes those stories.

Ah the Prince, the Pindola, they are giggles—are such the tough men of the west it is to be the famous yellow takeover. They thought I shall seem to come by accident into their company? they shall make me so dependant on them, then trap me, then scare me absolutely off? I know when I meet little Bonzo he cannot rape a sponge, most clearly they are longing for that map. Now they have it. The police scared me to give it to them!?—do they think I have no memories, these "policemen" that invade my room were with that Hood in Rome as he argued modern thought. Quickly I decided, I must win Bonzo from the Prince, and never leave the Prince to suspect me, and it was for this our letters were the clinch. Sometimes it has been hard. For the American trip I had to sneak out in the mask of an old dame, that I made from the padding of my quilt, some pasted across my brows. But only now can they know.

Thus it was: Bonzo and I escape out of Florence. In a day the Prince notifies Bonzo he has shifted all blame onto him. So, Bonzo can say to me, watch out, I Twang am an accomplice, I shall better stick to him. This is so he can stick to *me*, to watch me, not let me warn you, should I know their plans to use the map. I was content for I needed some time to harass the Pindola about the chest. Already I grasp Bonzo tight—we shall marry! That is the "certain agreement" that at first I did not explain. So foolish the man was, it was I Twang who must beg him to marry with property in common—he thinks still that I am rich, he thought I asked money from you because I'm so tough I shall not lose one cent. I teach him, it is wrong for a wife to own more than a husband.

In Lerici we wait, nothing to do. I'm hard to him. One day I say I want that chest as an engagement present, he said, a stupid idea, it weighs some quintals. I twrist his arm harder. Still he thinks it cannot be, also it is his father's. I said the old fellow's gaga, I want the antique silk, some will be found

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from the rot to sew into my wedding gown; and promise to be nicer to him, oh much nicer.... O.K.! He orders that the chest be sent in a truck. That evening on the beach, I must (dear one you shall please forgive) I must, so that he keep his mind away from that decision, I consent to "grant him my favors" as he has always begged. So I "screw my courage to the sticking point," and vice versa, but he becomes so surprised that he was not able to fuck me. He just falls prostate to my feet. No matter, I have warned the police to be near and I tear some buttons in the dusk and scream and Bonzo is in the jail as rapist at last.

I kept the man there as long is needed. He cannot call the Prince to help, not without revealing the joke about the Prince turning against him. Then I let him out, annulling charges. To Bonzo I said that on the beach he hit me in one of his madnesses and I thought he wished to kill me. He connot remember through the shocks, I insist and scold him and he believes, such a kreep! and even's lowly ashamed. I say then, Off to Florence, prepare our wedding, it is Pan custom for the bride to be far from the coming husband, away! He did not want to go, it was a terrible struggle, but since it all took place inside him, I did not mind.

Meanwhile the Hood had come to Florence on March 22. This had made me think there is trouble on foot; this is why I force Bonzo hard. Hood must first have thought that Mauss had stolen the treasure, and made him arrested. But he learned soon there was no gold there, they had dug up a chest of bad silk. (And are they the first to know this—for Amortonelli and the captain I think never could look themselves into the chest, they believed the weight, or did not want the shoveling sailors to see.) I deduce that after this, they all look again at my letters and know the secret is in the Medici archives. They must have those bags, while I am kept away. They start the fire in the old library, so they can run in and "help". This was a guess, I only heard information on the radio pogrom; but next I read two burned in the fire, their names were of the little bodyguards. They must steal the bags of papers with the numbers they found in my notes. Well, I telephoned the

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police to look for those papers at the Prince's. They are several arrested. Not Hood, he's a wily man, you were my dear one in the hands of a very bad hat! Yet Bonzo arrives in time to climb aboard the padded wagon.

So now the Prince and Pindola shall drop their marbles where they may. Poor Bonzo, again in jail! He's wrong for such work, being a sure psychopath—those rages, those callapses. It is said, also, that only old age can cure the psychopathic personality, and if there is a thing Bonzo does not wish it is the growing old.

Hastily I must tell you one last discovery, then I shall run with a taxi to the central post office and send you this. I confess, I have indulged one extra research. It was because the name of Salvestro's mother, not the Christian one given, but her own from the east, is Twang—or, *Tuan*, but even now the Italians call me thus. I have laughed and believed nothing but chance there, yet anyway I inquired. She was twenty-five years old in 1431, therefore she was likely born in Tana, or better on the way from Tana and this is why she had no marks. Was her mother able to be Pan, and so far from our country? That was not probable, it was possible. I wondered: where did Salvestro go with her, when he left Italy? And asked for your microfilms. One more thing to love you for. The missionaries are established in time. So I could learn that Salvestro the Spice Trader came there, to Pannam Tuan's home, he has married in 1489 and his children were baptized later. I laugh some more and write my father, and he has told me that in a little chapel at the village Namma Bamma there is a western portrait of a male that has been cleaned last year, and scholars call him Francesco de' Medici! Salvestro's father! That village is next to ours, to that village where you came to me, my Zachary, and consider it is perhaps from Salvestro that I am born, with his mother's name that is saved through our family, a rare name, and also my first name, in Pannam this is a reference to my hero protector, usually of legend, but think that Tro-tsi, Salves*tro* Medi*ci*, do you recall how we called you Kri until I could master your beloved name, cutting off the last sound to mean the foreign word? And therefore I shall be the treasure's heir? *Evvivano le palle!*

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For I have it. That chest came to Lerici, I climbed into the truck, opened it. Under the shreds my arm stuck into the gold bits from the fingertips to my elbow. I filled one palm for expenses, and your ticket. At once I had brought a big chain and bound it and without leaving it off the truck forward it to Genoa. And after I released Bonzo and he left to Florence, I followed.

The affair is done. Early I went today to the shipping offices and made almost every arrangement, it was only not possible to get much insurance, tomorrow I'll argue more about that —it is for this why I did not write until this afternoon, it must all be done! Oh that letter made me bad in business. A gentleman asked, "What must be the date of arrival?" and I answered, "He is the most exquisite of men." Another desired to know, "Is there a Burmese address?" I replied, "Perhaps he will be here Sunday." One needed to be told, "How are we to declare these goods?" "Not leave him for an hour!" were my words. Yet the matter was concluded, and at noon the chest was already sunk in to the hold of the *Odradek Stadion*, a vessel that is property of the Malta Cross Shipping Company of Panama, chartered by Metternich Services Anstalt, a Swiss-registered company with offices in Liechtenstein, fitted out in Greenore, Eire, carrying U.S. equipment, and a Dutch captain and crew! At least, it keeps the Panama flag. It will carry the box to Rangoon, best market of gold in this material-subtle world.

The weather is of heaven, *langoureux vertige*, spring fever. Through gentle air, my mind fills up with such a goodness of love for you, my beloved and ever-desired, towards the west expanding first, over the seas, promontories and islands that make you distant from me, thinking: you are to tell me today as you see these words, that I shall very soon have the honor of kneeling again at your feet when you consent to come here, oh most soon. For until that hour I can live only in expectation of this, meditating on your perfection. I shall tell you, the vainest man never found in his mirror half the beauty I see in you, your way, your voice, every glance motion and gesture has such radiance my whole being is possessed and

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there is no life for me except in the hope of your affection. I cannot say it, only I love you with the most wild passion that ever came into woman. I wish my life's action to be discovering of means to convince you that you are preferable to everything pleasant on earth. My mind is so full, so full of you, Zachary! It swells in this goodness all of love over the world, then to the north, now I see some lightning of first summer warmths, and it's as I shall feel of you when first I see you distant, still faceless; and south, there are I believe shells on the beach and I remember that never will you collect them, I'll be a shell you can just walk on my uncollected skull if that be your pleasure; and east, the sun, the golden sword of new life! Come soon! And up to the sky, a big blue cranium—no that is not the flower name I want, but you can understand I desire to symbolize my desire, while below the earth would have me of course reminded of Mister Dharmabody, you must bring him no matter how old and worn he has become, and I think I must make him to bite me for that blow, it was not you it was Twang inflicted that. So much love within me, spreading about, what is there it will not enfold—perhaps my typhoid germs? which were yesterday innoculated into me, and it's plain the immunizing produces a tough form of that disease! It pierces the whole world. You are to be emperor of the world in my explosion adoration, I'll drag you *nel giallo della rosa sempiterna*, do you know, into the yellowness of the eternal rose, that opens, clambers, casts perfumes of praise to the sun that lasting springmaker, and I shall hope, it does not make your hair grow again, that smoothness is pleasanter—the bodily hair is what most disconcerts in occidentals, and without it also your fat shall be a gentle smooth quality only with hair is it terrifying. I shall pluck my pubis smooth as yours. Yet Zachary, do not although I say these eat every food, not for fat and thin, but I shall recall, "Whatever food a man eats in this life, by that food he is eaten in the next." It seems my head my breast will break with my love of you, or I shall be a balloon, I'll float through a grand landscape that shines, yellow pots big as mountains, platters like luminous cities, glasses and crackery like valleys like express-

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ways, as if they were blazing in yellow lights, from below and above, but all arranged in round ranks and balancing as one thing on a broomstick as long as an ocean, and we are in the middle of the ranks of dishware thinking we are becoming insane from too much love, no, it is only these things are harmless—but this morning, I made a little altar in my room. I set incense and flowers on it. This was that I might exhibit, to myself, Twang's grief of your suffering. Each morning I shall put new incense, flowers, until you are next to me. Now you take five dollars even if your last and send a cable. I have telephoned but it will not answer, and shall wire but you will not believe it, but you must go to the air office, and there is the ticket to Italy for you, and I shall this time be waiting at the airport of Rome. There can be no more error, it is no longer in my power, there is no more harm in our mind there is no limit there is no hatred of anything breathing or unbreathing—it is a mind without knowledge of ill will, my Zachary! but you must come. Alone I cannot carry this burden of joy, and doubt

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Ron Padgett

Homage to Franz Schubert

for Alec Bond

I saw the lovely sky, blue and bright.
If only I were a little bird
Inwardly firm, so I might
Delight myself with lovely sights.

The huntsman's out to kill us who pecked at his fruit.
How clearly the moonlight speaks to me:
You will find the right words
To gaze on the earth from a dazzling height!

What can be the real difference?
Difference?
O fate, O sad duty,
O mankind, O life, what does it mean?
They grumble toward heaven,
But ah, who will lay me in it?
Being already up there
In the deep, deep grave
Of the stars

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How wan the moon, how dim the stars
Passed over from the world:
The sky is so clear.
Then gallop boldly through the night!

Though the wood stretch out deep and dense
Far over land and sea we watch
And when the earth is young again
Only a shadow yet remains behind.

So long as I am in powerful motion,
Up and down mountains, in and out of forests,
It draws me more strongly down to you.
We are both mighty wanderers

For everything is as it was then—
The sky endlessly outstretched
Like your moonlight through space,
Inspiring me for my travels.

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So I walk on in the dark,
In wild troughs and lofty crests,
Where I walked by her side,
I on earth, you in the sky
And earth and sky have vanished from me.

Over their heads eternity still circles;
Here it billows up, there swoops down,
Rock rolled upon rock,
But I am nowhere, alas!

I look with longing,
Climb boldly, sing merrily,
Breathe the holy air,
Until God, in heaven's pure light,
Did not know one thing from another!

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To eat, drink and be glad,
Ecstatic and rip-roaring with joy,
And smile and think
In metallic harmonies
From Western cradle to Eastern grave,
In the grave so peaceful, so cool!
The grave rather damp and musty.
In the forest, the forest, they bury me,
Gentle ebb and high tide deep in my heart:
Please follow the imagery:
A boat swims on the mirror of the waves,
The waves rustle
At the blue of the waves
In the sky
And my passing is enveloped in overwhelming splendor;
It rushes on with gentle quivering,
Breaks old Saturn's scythe in two
And so easily avoids all misery

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And when we exchange kisses,
Your majesty,
Who have achieved sweet dreams
When the mighty tempests roar
And beddy-bye time disappears into the Meridian,
I will run my Cadillac flaming
Over a cliff but
Where? Where?

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The Saddest Story

I would like to tell you a story.
My little wife suggested that I tell you this story
because she received such pleasure from it,
and I such pleasure in the telling.

Once there was a musical note.
It had a thin black stem, a black bulbous dot
on its side at the bottom, and on top a
single line jetting back. The note
lived in a universe whose time was equal
to its space: one could move through
this world by staying put and waiting
until enough time had passed to be somewhere
else.

There was also in this world
a metronome which served as overseer
of the time-space continuum, a regulator
of the so to speak *basso continuo* of existence.
The metronome was unaware that he in turn
was overseen by a higher power, a man
named Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Mozart
was a child who had the physical appearance
of a genius, so that when he appeared
in public great sheets of light ripped
from his presence and flew away. One such
sheet wrapped itself around a bird so
that the bird was shot through with
this light.

The villagers noticed a bright
object in the sky at night, moving about
unlike stars or moon or other celestial bodies,
and soon they created stories to explain
this phenomenon. You see, they were unable
to see Mozart: he had been dead
for over 200 years. But his death was the kind

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that remains over the years that pass,
not under them. He was buried in the sky,
and if you'll recall what I told you
about the time-space continuum you'll understand
just what I mean. Anyway,
one explanation of the gliding brightness
in the night sky was that some electricity
from a bolt of lightning had been captured
inside an idea which had lost the mind
it came from. Others felt that some sticks
had caught fire.
Neither of these theories was true, although
the sticks idea is interesting: the bird
could die, decompose, fertilize a small tree
and go into the limbs which then
would fall or be torn from the tree,
set alight and cast into the air.
The second movement of the arm that cast them,
the downward movement, the arm
attached to the body of Mozart
as he composed his Serenade No. 11,
the downward movement, I say, terminates
in a delicate flutter of the wrist and fingers,
and the cuckoo bird alights on a branch.
It sits there for a moment, sensing.
Once again the arm rises. The bird pours forth
a song which the Japanese felt sounded
like *hototogisu*, which is Japanese
for "cuckoo," whereas we think it sounds
like "cuckoo." The fact that both cultures
are correct illustrates my point
about the time-space continuum.
Actually the *hototogisu* and cuckoo are
different birds, but I equate them
to demonstrate a point. But back to our story.

First let me explain that the villagers'
first explanation, of electricity trapped

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inside an idea which had lost the mind it came from,
would have been true had they not carelessly
sought to explain everything by electricity.
"Electricity" was a word they used
at random, a catch-all meaning virtually nothing.
Electrical concepts had permeated their religion
the way atoms permeated matter in the twentieth century:
so small as to be everything
once you got the idea. The idea
the villagers had was correct insofar
as they linked the mysterious nocturnal illumination
to a mental being, to, of course,
none other than Mozart. He is in
this room with me right now, not
figuratively speaking: he quite
literally is in this room, his real physical person.
He is signing a contract which will
grant me all rights to his works past,
present and future. Actually this is a part
of the story I should have reserved for later,
and about how he is deaf, dumb, blind and paralyzed
from the toes up. Yes, time has taken
its dreadful toll of the great composer, even.
Think of the men who dragged great stones
over vast deserts, only to hurl them
into deep chasms! Great stones
which diminish in size as they fall,
clattering like small hailstones
as they hit the canyon floor, where Handel
scoops them into a basket. Back
in his cave he affixes stems to them;
if only he had a staff to place them on!
Instead he must fling them into the air
and watch them increase in size, only
to fall back. Of course some notes did
continue to rise from time to time:
The Harmonious Blacksmith is one example,
notes that go so high up they become planets.

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Incidentally, the planets of the solar system,
arranged on a circular staff around the sun,
form the basis of Couperin's *Pièces*
de Clavecin, but perceived as
the "music of the spheres" not in two dimensions
but in three: this "natural" music being
more complete than "written" music,
which is flat, pardon the pun. The great beauty
of man's "written" music consists in its complete removal
from anything we think of as "real," in fact
it is very much like the word "real" itself:
once said it becomes utterly without meaning.
But this digression goes on too long: my story
concerns the single and remarkable meeting of
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) and George
Frideric Handel (1685-1759).
You will notice that Mozart was three when Handel died,
or so musical history tells us. The truth
of the matter is that Handel did not die
until the autumn of 1786, when he not only
met the young Mozart but actually
collaborated with him on an operetta in one act,
Bastien und Bastienne, K. 50, a piece commissioned
by Dr. Anton Mesmer, the discoverer of animal magnetism.
Mesmer was a perverted homosexual who attempted
to use his discovery for evil ends:
he tried to hypnotize pretty young Viennese boys.
He was successful in the case of Mozart, in fact
Mozart wrote his part of *Bastien und Bastienne*
under hypnosis. Handel was of course a notorious
homosexual in his own time, but was well
beyond his prime by 1768. He refused to submit
to hypnotic suggestion and in fact was unaware
that the young Mozart was "in Mesmer's power."
The premiere of *Bastien und Bastienne* took place
in the open-air theater of Mesmer's house
in the suburbs of Vienna, with Mesmer directing
the production and playing Bastienne. In

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his perversity he cast the by then ancient
Anna Maria Strada del Po, the exceptionally ugly
opera star whom Londoners had nicknamed "The Pig,"
in the role of Bastien. Colas was played
by a someone who drifted back
into the forever mists of the Unknown.

Mesmer, an insanely jealous man, suspecting
that Handel was about to steal his young lover,
devised a monstrous plan which culminated
in having Handel bound and gagged, carted
onto the stage near the end of the sixth scene,
and as Bastienne sang

> O Lust, o Lust
> Für die entflammte Brust!
>
> O Joy! O Joy!
> For the burning breast!

he set fire to the venerable composer.
The light-hearted pastoral continued
with no one taking notice: Mozart under
hypnosis, Anna Maria Strada del Po a hopeless
senile and opium addict, and the audience
a bizarre group of statuary assembled
by Mesmer from all over the world.

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Tropicalism

Kenward Elmslie

1.

Ate orange.

Legs stained... stains turn into fur patches... fur patches turn into puma hide ...palaver re escape route... boy's lips... chicken feather along outer perimeter of lower redder one, with up-and-down wrinkles... too much pursing... spooky profiles peer sideways on high-rise balconies... just dummies so the gov't'll think everyone's home.

2.

More palaver: ante-bellum. One lays one's smock on the griffin. Siesta after a Technician Feast of foie gras, washed down with Grapette. Siesta leaning against the Michelangelo Adam—cold muscles against which one rubs—no guards to be afraid of. Gosh, how did they trundle them here? Via those new erosion lines, along the orange-red rivulets coursing beside the highway. Clump of bad-mannered executives from the south, i.e., "north" by your mental gymnastics, but a fresh new north, full of fresh new... executives... from even further north... they really model themselves on penguins...

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experts at survival... waiting under trees with leaves that hang down like exhausted elephant ears, waiting for the rain to stop so they can motion for the flotilla disguised as a parrot parade float, with its ack-ack measles pellets that sound like someone sucking a stone teat. Ack-ack! Ack-ack!

3.

Just have to wait till the situation is more "human." Coated with mud, massive anxiety attacks: vapors, zinc, can of *petit pois*, zinc, vapors. In the steam-room, a friendly Texan haw-haw, iced drinks sent in, two pink pillows with flamingo feathers inside, everyone oils up, and there's a lot of give-and-take (Embassy jerks) about lore.

4.

They have two white-leaved vines twining around the Warrior Tree, which the men ingest the bark of, daily, thereby ingesting stren't. Also killing tree. When tree dies, so does Chief. Walks off into jungle. Some dress up in woman-ish fur-pieces, secrete beads under rock, join up with neigh-boring tribe as Chief's "priestess-bride." No one can touch priestess privates, real bad magic to see his dong. Doesn't exist. So, he has pick of women—that's really something: guilt mechanisms just don't function non-screwball way. So, he has pick of women. Chief's duty to fuck him up ass. While this, he is (belief) in trance communion state with this place's Warrior Tree, knows whether to attack other tribes or not, how, when. Say he says: ATTACK! So, they do. Victory! Metamorphosis: he becomes Chief's twin. Even-tually, that means trouble. One-to-one fight, using two sticks. Poison on one end of one stick. Up to resident Chief's #1 Wife to hand out sticks. If she digs new Chief Twin he's in like Flynn. Poison by the way not fatal. In fact it's leaf-drug

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which elevates defeated chief into magic state: fly like bird, swim like fish, climb vines like fast bug. Ends his days revered Prophet. Food and love offerings daily, as he sits cross-legged at door of his stilt hut. Dies. Carried to top of Warrior Tree by youths and pulleys and basket of Eternity & Rain set in raft made of pelts tied to balsa, and there: set on fire. Ashes eaten by entire tribe, one speck or flake per person, wrapped in raw vine leaves. Two new vines planted by Resident Chief. Time begins again. Year One.

5.

...but ice is like a ray sleeping... I sobered up to certain pesky circumstances. How to stave off the hierarchic patterns that really maim—reduce them to a few ingratiating scars on my harelip?

6.

By staving off the mysterious death of Architecture as we know it, I cheated myself of an empty contentedness. The suite was full of necessities. Tinting spansules is a profession, yes. Disconcerting, but true. But what about the statue in the hall outside? Who is this "Horst"?

7.

The authorities here are highly susp—shush! OK to take this down. Che is going into market research, more relevant than doctoring the poor. OK to take this down, they don't give a flying fuck. Every life saved broadens the base of the population pyramid that much more, until its substrata... slimy and fetid but with more energy than the "thin-out" line near top... OK, take this down, friend. Roaches, tarantulas, roach-

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es, tarantulas: in convoys of ten each they hurry along the traffic lane marked with day-glo dots, and down the starveling's throat. The Big Divvy according to the (transmission problems, friend, bear with me)—in the fields at low enough level to circumvent the inevitability of mechanization taking command (sorry, pal, different feeder channel for the nonce—erratum: nuns) in which case the population pyramid (bye, folks, time to go underground again) will be restructured into an obelisk, squeezing the hierarchy into a more nakedly verticle pattern that makes it impossible for them to reproduce themselves in sufficient numbers—less intermingling, less sloppy pecking-order in-fighting, more intra-bureau phoning, more non-destruct memos, more solitude at one's booth, to which one is assigned early in life, but this obelisk isn't practical yet (hi, back again, it's me)—pyramid has years to go as long as its base keeps widening (say) five per cent per annum—then its weight is sufficiently diffused to reduce the rate of sinkage to (say) ten per cent per annum, which gives us (say) oh, 2050 may be a bit hectic and the pyramid may have to be converted into a rectangle: sarcophagus, with the lid hooked from the inside to cut down on hanky-panky —(no need to take the rest down: message is over)—golf pro has yen for daughter, not flabby henna mama—only daughter and school chum—gov't censor demands X number pesetas leave in snatches throbbing, with the one girl tracing on the other girl's boob: Che—finger writing, invisible. Audience thinks it's "AMOR"—except for politics buffs.

8.

Regular paintings in front of the arch with the discreet black curtain. Most interesting, such a hard glare beating down on the lilies (Utrillo), with the ballerina electric mixer (Duchamp) floating over the Tudor bed and its inviting sateen spread, reflected in the mirror, and the pretty couple in the background, their bodies lightly touching, staring at the dawn from the balcony. They've been talking all night, you can tell,

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because they're Romeo and Juliet, and they have a great many lines to get through without any mistakes, and what with the tricks of authentic pronunciation, and the subjunctive tenses coming at them so fast—

9.

Men working very high up, suspended in big wooden crates. Night shifts all over the city are finishing up the white high-rises before the next onslaught of boondockers arrives, getting in on the proverbial ground-floor.

10.

Che is so trusting re "truth and consequences." He's too Western, he has dreams of walking with Nixon through the native villages, they go in one, and light up, just sit there—Nixon is converted! He brings the brass next time—they're converted! Big Ten Day Speech to the U.S. Must stop "exploiting" etc. Impeached naturally. Chaos: villages: smoke rises from distant chimney. Bumblebees crawling around the empty Bumblebee Tuna Can.

11.

Racial memory last night of a facial memory. Of an infinite number of taps (raindrops on leaf for months, months) that go into making a stone more cushion-like when one drapes one's back across it, forming an upside-down horseshoe shape. I love that sacrifice face! Generally a stoop-shouldered—better stop here so as not to scare off *turismo*.

Bests,
President Bela Lugosi

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12.

Impossible to get those leaves to NYC in time to be effective. Also the dosage. We're working on it, but even so, packaging is the hang-up. It's all yellow with cougar urine stains, and there are brown spots on the dosage instructions, on crucial words, such as A.M. and orifice and ballyhoo. Must, repeat MUST trace them to source up-jungle. Or else the normals will flounder in a morass of mini-

Hot Dog ends up Hot Girl.

13.

Zouave to mustachio gent in Paris *pissoir:*

"Why are you carrying so many loaves?"
"Er—I live in the country—"
"Feed *this*—non-organic—"

14.

Crazier mix here. Spooning by the ocean, barricaded against the African Experience. Ill-fitting composites: hot pants, snoods, cloches, pink curlers hanging from plastic sandwich wedges on charm bracelets. Lady in evening dress—fervent movie kiss, thrusts against escort. Her VW takes off. With a happy sigh, on the outside looking out, aware he must hammer at the outer edge of the outmost shell of the new exterior phase, the gringo, wearing an immaculate white shirt, finished his last joint, swallowed his last mild pep pill, and crossed the frontier.

15.

At the stroke of six, the lost panorama struck up its song.

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Zone B another in Zone H Zone B
virile life mad colonel virile life
no facilities cycle no facilities
natural zonings
ABCDE
cicadas
ABCDE
natural zonings
bobbing a leaf-cutter ant bobbing
dismantle Futbol Night Club dismantle
Zone X another in Zone W Zone X

falling feathers red falling feathers
no operas glutted mongrel no operas
abolish W Nazi bare patch abolish W
watch out you
watch out you
cicadas
watch out you
watch out you
lit up birds circling over meat markets
wing edges no FBI no FBI wing edges
cut off Amazon mezzo-soprano in mid-cad

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puma-eyed guys lean out windows Sundays
humming songs of lives lived real heavy
grass rustles from ungainly cranings of
beaks and masks
beaks and masks
milky
trees and vines
trees and vines
grass rustles from ungainly cranings of
humming songs of lives lived real heavy
puma-eyed guys lean out windows Sundays

sanitary gobbet sun sanitary gobbet
wing edge: saw sun saw: wing edge
rubber bra firecracker rubber bra
death candy
death candy
do it
death candy
death candy
giant awakes nodding off giant awakes
men shovel the nuts will buy putt-putts
baby girders nodding off baby girders

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some sort gov't loudspeaker answer here
bad gas not firecracker not bad gas
some sort gov't loudspeaker answer here
watch out you two
do it do it
watch out
do it do it
watch out you two
change subject change subject
humming bird humming bird
out of reach feast out of reach

let's fuck he said let's fuck he said
Mawarye and Woxha Mawarye and Woxha
me too he said we fuck he said me too
watch out you two
do it do it
watch out
do it do it
watch out you two
the honeyfish inside her bit off a cock
lost your cock lost your cock
I know Woxha weeps I know

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river way up river way up
standing in water the hoofs of the cows
rot away and piranha bite off the teats
9:45 9:45
banana and coffee
"Ada"
banana and coffee
9:45 9:45
river entered the city in Fifties or so
triangular baskets in warehouse shadows
rain disposal rain disposal

she told us not to she told us not to
picked up turu seed picked up
picked up Mawarye Mawarye picked up
push in push in
make new make new
just fine
make new make new
push in push in
let's fuck he said let's fuck he said
Mawarye and Woxha Woxha and Mawarye
me too he said we fuck he said me too

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peer at shit white worms peer at shit
palm hearts sun palm hearts
vague bites light sleep vague bites
lovebirds
bus
heh-heh
bus
lovebirds
sex program dunno sex program
three in a bed dream three in a bed
dream Birthday! dream

overcast again "Ada" overcast again
departure today "Ada" departure today
live for a moment and light up a: Torre
lentils
feast
feast
lentils
white heron stared at the pleasure boat
one Paris one NYC one Belém one Chicago
one Sao Paulo one Zurich one El Capitan
sloth on tree sloth on tree
fish leap
rum
sun
ate

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Some Side Effects of Time Travel

Gail Godwin

"Hwaer cwom mearg? Hwaer cwom mago?" asked Professor MacFarlane and he meant it.

He had a right to that poem. Gretchen had been waiting all during summer school to hear him eulogize that, his, our, her lost world. *Where is the Horse? Where is the horserider? Where is the giver of rings? Alas, that space of time has gone, become dark under cover of night, as though it had never been.* MacFarlane said, "In those days nobody cared about signatures. So 'The Wanderer' is anonymous." Gretchen raised her hand and said, "Do you think 'wanderer' adequately translates *anhaga?*" (Already knowing what he would answer, having read his thoughts on the subject in his own translation of Old English poetry, but wanting him to say it to *her*.) "No," he said, "some people," and named a professor of a rival edition, "say 'lone-goer.' I myself like to translate it as 'he who is solitarily situated.' "

Yes.

Professor MacFarlane is a bachelor. He lives alone in a big house in this Midwestern town and walks to the university puffing his pipe and swinging his Harvard bag. (*And storms beat against the stone cliffs...*) His toes turn a little outward as he

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walks. He's sixty-two. The town he comes from in North Carolina is gone. His great-grandfather, a leader of men in the Revolutionary War, founded it. When the oldest of MacFarlane's nine sisters and brothers got ready for college, the mother decided to move them all to the state university. When the MacFarlanes left MacFarlane, so did everybody else, and now the town is wilderness again.

Gretchen loves MacFarlane next to Borges. The day Borges came to town she cried for all the lost hours she could not spend with him. She went to Woolworth's and bought a gaudy yellow jersey (the same color as the old STOP signs) to wear to his colloquium because she had read in a *Paris Review* interview that yellow was the only color Borges could now see. At the colloquium he sat polished and bemused by a world outside of time. He was infinitely loving to everyone and said the reason his stories were so short was because he liked to carry all of them around in his head and there was just so much room. He signed Gretchen's copy of *Dreamtigers* with a shaky JB and she carried away his delight at still being able to see the tiger ("A very *Chinese* tiger, isn't he?") when he pressed her book practically against his eyes. She left her own pen in his hands and tiptoed away, wanting him to carry a part of her back into his timeless world.

When it lightnings and thunders, Professor MacFarlane takes a taxi to the English Building and sits out the storm (day or night) in the faculty lounge. Graduate students tell tales of how they find him sleeping erect with his spine ramrod straight against one chair and his impeccably polished shoes just grazing another. Sometimes, he wakes at their entrance and they invite him down to their offices for coffee. Being polite, he wrenches himself from the mead-hall dream, from the lost song of the *scop*, and travels down on the elevator to one or another of the basement offices to sit beneath posters of Paul McCartney or Che Guevara and sip freeze-dried coffee ("I'm terribly sorry, there's no cream.") from a mug.

Some say he was frightened of mountain thunderstorms as a child. Others, including the campus policeman who guards the fortress of literature from eleven P.M. til six A.M.,

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the Dark Ages, say that when MacFarlane was in the War, he was trapped for days in a trench and went temporarily mad trying to distinguish between the sound of machine-gun fire and the sound of thunder. Nobody has bothered to ask MacFarlane. The little mystery makes them revere him more.

Borges, who is older than MacFarlane, recently married his childhood sweetheart. Gretchen will soon be thirty-one, outliving Keats by six years and Shelley by one. She will be two years younger than Abbie Hoffman, and Jesus of Nazareth and Alexander of Macedonia when they died. She'll be four years younger than Virginia Woolf and Iris Murdoch when they published their first novels. All Gretchen's childhood friends have children in the second grade. She likes to tell herself that loving men like MacFarlane and Borges is just one more trick time is playing on her. (*Assuredly no man can acquire wisdom until he has been many years in the world.*) All she has to do is get outside of time, her mother keeps telling her. Her mother has made it. Her mother reads only medieval literature and science fiction. She refuses to truck with the present. She makes her doctor write her age in a code which only the two of them can decipher. She is an insomniac and married to a villain, which suits her fine, since he is in present time. While he sleeps, she lies next to him and reads St. Theresa's *Interior Castle* in the original. "God lives outside of time," she wrote to Gretchen at graduate school. "When are you going to get that through your head?" Borges told Gretchen and others who crowded into the same faculty lounge where MacFarlane sleeps erectly through his storms that Kipling had never understood what time was all about as long as he lived in that ancient country of India. But once back in England, he happened to dig up an old Roman coin in his own backyard and the past flowed over Kipling as a real presence for the first time.

"*Was your first lipstick Fire and Ice?*" A full page color ad addresses itself to a reluctant Gretchen from the pages of *The New Yorker*.

Yes, what about it?

She looks critically at the stylish group of matrons waiting

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for their husbands at the Westchester Depot. "*Then YOU are ready for Eterna 27*," the ad soberly reminds Gretchen. She runs to the mirror. It is true? Does she need hormones to stir up blood in an ageing face? Did Virginia Woolf use hormone cream? No, but her bones were better. Gretchen will not ever be found waiting in Westchester Depot. She is too old to be a Hippie, but she reads about them and secretly fears they might have the answer, like the Rosicrucians and the Scientologists and the little heretic band St. Augustine went around with before he became a saint. When she was an undergraduate ten years ago, everybody was reading *On The Road* and she got along fine with the Beats. They published one of her stories in their underground magazine. At the time she was flirting with proletariat-images, so her story was about a poor old newspaper vendor who loved art. He saved for weeks to get his shoes shined so he could go and see the Rembrandt's but when he got to the museum there was an admission fee of fifty cents which he couldn't pay. Defeated, he returned to Joe's Diner where Joe let him charge his dinner. He consoled himself by walking into the scene of a Coca-Cola poster on the wall. When the magazine came out (it was banned within hours by the local postmaster and Gretchen always felt queasy that the poem with the fucks that caused all the trouble had been right across the page from the end of her story) Gretchen went to a Beat party and necked with the editor for a long time in the attic loft where a Negro lived with a white girl, which was something in those days in that town, which was the same university town in North Carolina that MacFarlane's mother took her family to live in.

Gretchen Brown Wolf Finney Martin Brown. Maiden. Adopted by villain stepfather. First marriage. Second. A maid again. Social Security office going wild with her. Martin is the only one licensed to drive. Finney may still take books from a library in Copenhagen. Income-tax people still hunting her down south. A cache of confusing identities in her wallet. Husband no. 1: a stunt photographer on the big jazzy paper where she went to work after graduating from J-school. He flew upside down in planes and photographed cities devas-

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tated by earthquakes. Gretchen went out on the less spectacular assignments with him. When they were flying together into the eye of a hurricane, Gretchen suddenly felt reckless and proposed. He hit her in the face (after they were married, of course); Gretchen retaliated by locking him out of the house and making obscene gestures at him through the window. He came crashing through the glass and almost lost a hand. Gretchen's stepfather drove all night to come and get her. His favorite slogan from this day forward was: "She hates my guts, but who always has to come and pick up all the pieces?" The stepfather packed her books in the back of his station wagon, stopped by her psychiatrist's to get her a bottle of tranquilizers, and felt free to lecture her on the meaning and responsibilities of life for 1600 miles.

She went to Europe on a Danish freighter called *The Oklahoma*, and sometime later stumbled upon her second husband in a creative writing class at the London City Literary Institute. He was a visionary, with side-interests in astrology, ESP, magic, nudism and Scientology. Together they joined the Scientologists, drove down on weekends to L. Ron Hubbard's castle in East Grinstead donated by the Maharajah of Jaipur. They were Power-Processed, for a couple of thousand dollars, into more aware and potent human beings by being hooked up to an electropsychogalvanometer. They held tight to stripped V-8 juice cans which were attached to electrodes and answered questions which they had to sign papers promising never to reveal to anyone. (Ron said if the world got hold of these questions prematurely, it could blow itself up.) During Power Processing, each processee was expected to have a certain number of visions. According to the Scientologist instructors, Gretchen was not having her quota. So, for another hundred bucks, they ran an S&D on her, which means Search and Discover, in order to find out just who or what was keeping her from "Making Gains," as they termed it. This onerous obstructor was called The Suppressive Person, a figure hated and feared by all Scientologists. Gretchen had to make a list of all the people in her life who had influenced her in any way. Then the auditor (the man on the other side

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of the meter) read these names aloud, while Gretchen held tight to the V-8 cans, and noted her electrical response on the dial. When he came to "God," she registered the worst needle-read of all, dubbed by Ron "the Rock-Slam," which is even more deadly than the agitating "Theta Bop." Gretchen was sent at once to Ethics, on the third floor of this drafty castle, where the Ethics officer, a young woman with red lipstick from Austin, Texas, told her: "What you've got to do is take this yellow slip of paper and write a letter to your SP, disconnecting from him." "But listen," said Gretchen, trying to coerce the woman into a collusive smile, "Don't you see who my Suppressive Person is?" "Honey," said the woman, "He's your SP, that's all that interests me. Do you want to disconnect or don't you? We'll have to separate you from your husband, otherwise. *He's* making good gains." So Gretchen took her slip of yellow paper and wrote under the probing eyes of the Ethics Officer:

"Dear God. I am sorry, but I must disconnect from you."

She was awarded her Power Release pin, which cost five pounds, shortly afterwards, and told never to take it off. She and her husband went back to London. "I think I am going to have a nervous breakdown," she said. "I think I'll go home for a while and see my mother. Okay?" She went and never returned. She told her mother what she had done. "Well, you go upstairs this very minute and write Him a letter saying you're reconnecting," said her mother. "Then you write a letter to the Scientologists telling them to go to Hell." Gretchen obeyed. Soon they began the trip down, getting first in trouble with Parliament. Later, the murderers of several famous personages of our time were discovered to have been Scientologists and that didn't help, either. Gretchen followed the decline of this organization in the news media and felt avenged, but also strangely nostalgic for their perfect answers. Some of the secret questions had helped her.

Over the years, she has often waked and not known

what
where
who

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she is. Once when it was really bad, she woke up and had to start from scratch as a one-celled creature and work up through fish-hood, floundering on the shore until her gills had adapted to oxygen, and then struggling through evolution, not to mention generations. This was about the time when, having become confused by life, she decided to return to literature and get her breath in the ivory tower, picking up a few higher degrees while she gasped.

There was also the earlier time when she woke to the sound of a toilet flushing like someone was choking it slowly to death. It took her at least five minutes to locate her identity and five more to ascertain her geographical position on the earth: a fifth-floor room in a third-class Barcelona hotel and her lover had left her, gotten noiselessly out of bed and fled on his Sollebus (Danish for sun-bus) back to Denmark after having deposited some forty pale passengers in this February city. He was a bus driver named Sven. They had not been able to exchange a sentence in any mutual language, so she prattled English lovingly and he said short guttural things (some, she suspected, obscene) in Danish. The Spanish maid was flushing the communal toilet by pouring bucketfuls of water down it. Gretchen recalled nostalgically Sven's violent tattoos and realized she might indeed be pregnant and utterly alone with the wages of sin in a strange and chilly country. But real fears to her were never so bad as those *others*, the numinosum, as Rudolph Otto calls it, God preserve her from the terrible sight of His face until she could see it without the side effects suffered by poor Brother Nicholas of Flue who prayed and prayed to see His face, so God let him see it, and his own became ever afterwards paralyzed on one side, his heart, he after said, had burst into a million little pieces. Or, meshing with technocracy, you might paraphrase: Brother Nicholas had a stroke, and be less accurate. Gretchen could deal pretty well with real catastrophes, they seemed a necessary penance one paid to keep the others away. She went to Cook's and asked them didn't they have anything warmer than Barcelona. They sent her to a place off the coast of Africa, also Spanish, and on the plane she prayed for her

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period to come just this time and she would never be careless again. It came and she was careless again with a young revolutionary who managed the hotel where she stayed. He hated Franco. They would go for walks on the beach. On the moonlit sand he would write with a stick: FRANCO, SI! COMMUNISMO TAMPOCO. Then he'd erase it quickly with his toes.

This morning she woke in Chicago and knew who she was but not where. It was a gigantic basement resembling a subway station. There were energetic cubist paintings everywhere. Outside, above ground, someone was power-mowing and children were shouting. Also, men were working on a skyscraper. She heard their calls to one another between the thud of the pile driver. Then she remembered. "Ha, I'm improving." And rose and began writing on a rickety old Remington belonging to her hostess, who had gone to work. Last night she told the host and hostess, "I've finally hit upon a method of chronicling myself which won't bore me to death. I'll be me at my most entertaining with friends and wine after dinner. I'll tell it like the Icelanders told their sagas, just narrate, *this happened, Thor felt this*, etc., before the dawn of the writer's self-consciousness. Forget H. James, God love him, and the rules, the expectations of the clever reader, and go searching for myself all over the printed page, like an old country granny speeling her life, skipping round the years, sidetracking into the really choicy operations, the gall bladder, the hysterectomy, anecdotes about Ebenezer's drinking and how Maud was never the same since menopause, following her own infallible train of intuition like one does on long bus rides or just before falling asleep."

> Jung says: The word happens to us;
> we suffer it...

Gretchen had this typed on a notecard. Notecards are her way of tabulating and taping a madcap inner and outer world that shapeshifts and self-destructs by the second.

Whenever she gets bored with plotted, pared stories which restrict, leave out, scale down, distort, she shuffles through

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her vast collection of notecards, written over the heady years, which have no form, no system, no end and no beginning, no one subject or single style, no unifying principle.

These notecards are the nearest she has come to getting outside of time.

The first summer she went back to graduate school, she had one of her mysterious attacks in Burger Chef. She was sitting by herself eating a cheeseburger and reading *Sons and Lovers* (Mr. Morel had just hit Paul's mother in the face with the side of a drawer) and some boys behind her were tapping on their table with a pencil, when suddenly "it" happened. The world stopped. She forgot who she was. For a second—a half-second—eternity? she was suspended egoless in a totally featureless nothing. "It," say the doctors, is a sort of vertigo. *They* don't know. One doctor had the nerve to call it *petit mal*. When she came to herself, she went out in the sunshine and felt her way along the street, touching the bark of old trees and saying aloud (an exercise left over from Scientology, actually): Touch the tree. Thank you. Touch another tree. *Thank* you. She went to the English Building and sat at her desk in the basement and suddenly realized that the part she had taken for wood was only a clever plastic. She began to cry. Suddenly a vision materialized in the door: a tanned girl in white tennis clothes. "Gretchen all you do is think and study," she said. "I"m taking you home to spend the night with us."

The girl and her husband, a law professor, lived in the country. They were also writers. That night they were very good to her, appreciated her, fed her, let her watch *The Magnificent Seven* on TV while the girl did her pregnancy exercises and the man dusted their golden retriever with flea powder, sent her to bed early like a cherished child where from her pillow she saw the moon climb across the sky and heard cows mooing in the night outside. She awoke temporarily cured and after a big breakfast was left alone with her Old English verbs at their dining-room table while they went upstairs to their separate studios to create fiction. Gretchen looked at the dining-room table and decided to anchor her-

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self to her cure via a notecard. So she wrote the contents of their table on a card. It preserves as long as ink will last a segment of time when life was good. Today in Chicago or tomorrow in who knows where, she can run to her suitcase (she always carries a bunch of the cards, revolving them like a wardrobe) and flip through and find that table, and a happy state of her psyche, as it will never exist quite that way again, containing:

Ann Page's Orange Marmalade
Pepper mill (wedding gift)
Port bottle in straw jacket
Matches
Silver stamp holder with the couple's
initials engraved on it
An old 1966 appointment book containing
grocery lists
A stack of postcards to be sent later that
day and which did no good, saying:
"I am a housewife in your district
and a McCarthy supporter. When you
go to the Democratic convention I
hope you will take my preference
into consideration..."
Yellow flannel dusting cloth
Paraffin lamp
Tin of Little Holland cigars
Record jacket: Toscanini conducts
Mendelssohn's octet
Bill from Western Union, citing two
telegrams sent, one to Saunderstown,
one to Berkeley, with a reminder
printed in telegram script below:
THESE ARE A BIT OLD. PLEASE REMIT.
THANK YOU.
Bill from McNulty's Tea and Coffee Co. in
New York for 2 lbs. of French beans
Fourth page of a letter from somebody, which

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begins "...visit from Clare who is
still seeing Jack who tells her she's
intelligent and has gorgeous legs,
then never calls again. She remembers
everything he said..."

"Do you see what I mean about this sort of chronicling?" Gretchen asked her host in Chicago. "Sure," he said (he made movies), "it's a matter of kinetics, kinetic art, where the work of art is no longer The Object but simply moves with life along the path where the most relevant action is..." "STOP!" said Gretchen. She ran to get a few blank notecards.

Now at this moment, her clever host is on the other side of the city, editing his film, but she can have his wisdom from last night as though he were sitting across from her

Work of art is not the object but the
path of the movement
Work of art does NOT have to objectify
the movement, sum it up or give
shape to it; it simply charts,
like an encephalograph
The play of activity, life embraced BUT
NOT CAPTURED is the thing
There is no such thing as the finished
product

"I think the Middle Ages are coming back," Gretchen had said to her host and hostess, the Marvell Chapmans. "And so does Mother Maloney, that nun I was telling you about, and so does my mother and so does Roxanne and so do you because Roxanne told me you said it last week, and I know MacFarlane will welcome it. But it will be the Middle Ages with a difference, all of us forming a cohesion but now allowed to keep our egos which we developed so painstakingly during the Renaissance. We'll all be members of one body like St. Paul's head and foot and arm in Corinthians 12, each doing our own thing, nothing can be interchangeable in this human multimedia performance, we all have our place, and

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we'll use one another, scrambling on shoulders if nescessary, to reach de Chardin's God. It's all converging, I tell you. This afternoon your wife and I tried an experiment. Roxanne and I tried to pool ourselves and create a third person. Of course Borges has already done this down in Buenos Aires with Bioy Casares. They get together every night (or did before Borges got married) after dinner and become a third person and write stories by him. The stories are different from the ones either of them write. Roxanne was trying to funnel through to me what it was like to be her, you know: 'trapped in reality,' as she describes her state. And I was trying to show her what it is like to be living permanently in a state of fiction. What do I mean? I'll give you an example and you must promise you'll believe it. During my bus ride here, I was engaged in a more or less constant story. I was writing myself from minute to minute. I mean I saw myself as being read by somebody else, a sort of omniscient audience. Gretchen was on the Greyhound bus going to Chicago, thinking about herself as usual. Gretchen looked at the man sitting across the aisle. He was reading a book. She could see part of the title, *How to*— How to what? She squinted at a page he was reading and she could have sworn it said 'Raising Scorpions.' Could that be possible? Then believe it or not, and you've promised to believe, this man took out another book whose title Gretchen could see. It was called *Becoming a Writer*. He began reading and smoking and making hypertensive notes on a coffee-stained piece of paper on top of his closed briefcase. She saw him write 'John Keats' (or was it 'John Knox'?) Now she was out of her mind with curiosity. She put on her glasses and read what he wrote out of the corner of her corrected eye. He wrote, 'In 1784 I went...' and turned the page, scribbled a bit more, blacked it out with his ballpoint and went on writing: 'The word "late" may be used either as an adjective or an adverb.' The bus stopped and all the passengers fled through a driving rain to a fifteen minute coffee break. The man never got back on the bus. Do you see what I mean, Marvell?"

"Sure," said Marvell. He and Roxanne always saw. That

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was why she valued their friendship more than most. The three of them got together five, six times a year and made a haptophorous consciousness, each increasing and enhancing the others. They did a psychic three-man balancing act. They brought new blood to one another's faces. It always exhausted them. Tonight, after they'd done it, Roxanne spat a few hissing remarks at Marvell about not putting up the bathroom shelves and Marvell slumped in a canvas chair and went away to troubled Israel via TV while Roxanne washed all the supper dishes and Gretchen excused herself and fell into bed underneath a frightening cubist painting. On the dark ceiling, she read the words, "Gretchen Brown wrote herself to sleep..." But she and Roxanne had failed at their synthesis. They were going to try again with a tape recorder. If Gretchen could release Roxanne from her prison of fact, then Roxanne could start dreaming at night and let herself live in a meaningful myth.

> Neurotics may be simply people
> who cannot tolerate the loss of myth.
> Had they lived in a former age...
> —C. G. Jung
>
> —a Gretchen Brown notecard

"Did you dream last night?" Gretchen asked Roxanne this morning as Roxanne hung her heavy black tresses over the sink and splashed herself awake with cold water. "No." "I started to come in and shout you awake," Gretchen said. "I was going to scream WAKE UP RIGHT NOW AND HOLD ONTO THAT DREAM!" "God. You would have frightened me to death if you had done that," said Roxanne. "Well keep trying," Gretchen said. "You're bound to have one soon, now I've put the suggestion in you."

If their experiment works, then Roxanne will have herself a myth and Gretchen will no longer live in terror of being swallowed up by one of her own fictions during the dark hours. "How can I keep the witches away?" she had once asked her second husband, the visionary. "It's easy," he replied. He had once gone mad himself. "All you have to do is

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turn the room gold." "How?" she said. "Simple. The same way you let the witches get in."

Gretchen is lucky. She has found several stabilization points around which she orients the flux which is herself against the worse flux of the world: the cards, hot baths (taken whenever she feels threatened), Roxanne (who she has known for seven years during which both of them have been in flux), a hometown, mostly mythical now, which contains a convent (which is in dire flux), and a library which contains the books she read as a child, and a mother (who lives outside of time with God), and finally there are Gretchen's marvelous dreams, which she has befriended (as all the existentialist analysts encourage us to do) and which progress nightly on their own time track, supplementing her days, providing her with clues to what she must do next, reminding her who she really loves and really hates, forming hard gemlike little stories which read like fables and which reverberate with meanings overlapping the daylight world.

At the end of the Eisenhower Era, Gretchen Brown graduated from journalism school. While she was perspiring away in her cap and gown at the entrance to the football stadium, her physics professor, a little German with bushy red hair, jumped out at her from behind a tree and said, "Hah! Made it in spite of me, didn't you?" (He had given her a D-minus, which wrecked her average forever, and told her to wake up to the world of truth.) She went to work in a gaudy tropical city for a newspaper that had the second largest advertising in the world. Her train had a five hour layover in Georgia, where lives an aristocratic Professor of English who once courted and lost Gretchen's mother. He now enjoys the dubious pleasure of godfathering the sons of Gretchen's mother and the villain. Whenever Gretchen's mother considers reentering the present, she goes to a telephone booth and calls the professor and they discuss what might have been. He lives alone in a big inherited house, his wife and sons having left him (taking all the silver and china: he had to eat off paper plates for months) because he was a villain. When Gretchen stopped for five hours in his city, he met her at the station

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and took her home and showed her all his books on Dante and gave her dinner and cried. He told her he might have been her father. Gretchen, who was still in the stage where she liked to make distinctions between truth and fiction, wanted to ask if he meant that literally or figuratively, but didn't. He took her back to the train, told her she looked like her mother and gave her some money. She vowed to herself to write him a thank-you letter that would make up for all the suffering her mother had caused him, but somehow she never did. The professor called her mother later and said he really hadn't liked Gretchen very much. When Gretchen's mother told her this, Gretchen began having erotic dreams about the professor. Much later, she joined the MLA (Professor MacFarlane sponsored her) because her mother told her that the professor went to every MLA meeting in his private plane, regardless of where it was held. Gretchen had fantasies of meeting him at one of these conventions and afterwards he would call her mother from a phone booth and say how delightful Gretchen had become, after all.

There was a convent on the hill in Gretchen's town. It had once been a very plush resort hotel. Edgar Allan Poe had slept on the fourth floor, which was now condemned. Only the nuns now slept on this floor, considering themselves nearer to heaven whether the building stood or fell.

Before Gretchen went to become a newspaper reporter, she returned to this convent to reaffirm her childhood moorings. There was a nun there, Mother Maloney, from County Galway. Gretchen at twelve had fallen in love with this woman who was then thirty-nine. It was a very helpful love for Gretchen, and *The Well of Loneliness* may flick through some people's minds but is anything so cut and dried? Several years ago Gretchen talked at some length to an Englishman in the Grenadier pub and he said there was no such thing as men and women. Under the rays of Mother Maloney's love, Gretchen learned Gaelic, read Thomas Aquinas and *The Seven Storey Mountain* and got her saints in order. After supper, she would leave the unpleasant scene of her pregnant mother and villain stepfather and go to her room and lock the door. She

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would put on a certain Grieg symphony, get out her homemade journal (which she illustrated with little drawings and cutouts from magazines) and write down everything Mother Maloney had said personally to her that day. Mother Maloney used Cashmere Bouquet hand lotion and so Gretchen bought a bottle and rubbed her whole body with it before bedtime. When Grieg was over, she put on Rachmaninoff and got out Sir Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* and read aloud the part where Guinevere after disgracing herself with Lancelot enters the convent. The thought of becoming a nun sexually excited Gretchen, though she knew one was supposed to cancel out the other.

Then she would turn the light out and kneel down and look across row upon row of identical apartment houses (in those days the villain was poor) and pray to St. John the Beloved of Christ: "Please don't let the love of God die in me." She had a mortal fear of losing the feeling she had now. And she later did lose it. Then she would pray to St. Patrick, who was Irish, to let Mother Maloney go on loving her always. Gretchen walked back to the convent every Friday evening to go to the movie for the boarders. She and Mother Maloney arranged to sit together and when the lights went out they held hands in one of the deep pockets of Mother Maloney's habit.

In bed, Gretchen would smell the Cashmere Bouquet she had rubbed all over herself. When she took a bath, she looked down at her growing breasts. Mother Maloney had small ones, hardly discernible beneath her habit. The heavy silver cross rested in a very slight depression between them. "Please God," Gretchen would pray in the tub, "don't let them grow anymore."

Thank God He was paying attention to the farmers in Iowa who were praying for rain...or something.

At the convent that summer day before Gretchen went off to become a journalist, she and Mother Maloney sat on the porch of the old wooden hotel where EA Poe had slept. "Journalists can influence the world if anybody can," said Mother Maloney. Gretchen looked at the fine freckled skin

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of the nun and breathed in the smell of her habit (the smell of ironing and Cashmere Bouquet) and wanted very much to hold hands again. She felt that this convent containing this woman was a bastion of her own psyche which would remain stable when all else defected.

But the fire department condemned the third floor and then the second floor and finally the first floor and the old hotel was stripped and dismantled. The villain stepfather who had by then become a successful builder in the town came and took away all the old lumber. "They don't make wood like this anymore," he said. He saved a piece of banister railing for Gretchen who was then in Europe. The nuns moved into his modern convent which looked like a grasshopper about to jump. They named it Madonna Hall. Vatican II happened, the Hippies happened, and the nuns were obviously not doing as good a job as Gretchen's mother in living with God outside of time. They shortened their skirts, they abbreviated their veils, they took them off altogether. The saintly principal, a beautiful nun of thirty-four who had gone in when she was seventeen, went to New York to visit her twin sister who was an actress. One morning the milkman came. The saintly nun was still in her dressing gown and he thought she was her sister. Hi gorgeous, he said, you've cut your hair. She came back and taught another year at the convent and then she read a story in the *Atlantic Monthly* by Joyce Carol Oates about a nun who hid her coldness behind a habit and wouldn't hold the hand of a Jewish student at the hour he most needed to make contact with someone and afterwards he went out and killed himself. The saintly nun went to Reverend Mother and begged to be excused from her vows. She went to New York and got a job on a magazine. A year later her "story" was published in a ladies magazine. It was a rather sensational article including such sentences as "What did my first kiss feel like? I'll tell you..." The town was emptied of this magazine in three days. Some said the Reverend Mother had ordered all copies bought and destroyed. Gretchen wondered, when she heard about it, if her stepfather hadn't cornered the market and sold the copies for ten dollars apiece up at Merrill

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Lynch, where he often sat all afternoon in his overalls, chuckling aloud at his own good fate on the boards.

Gretchen was profoundly affected by this world that wouldn't stop changing. She wrote notecards by the dozens. At the time, she was back home, recovering from her second husband and Scientology. Meanwhile the saintly nun up in New York married an ex-priest. Vows flung fast and fierce, like a spiritual squash court. Has McLuhan done this to us? Gretchen applied, was accepted, hurled herself back into the comparative calm of a university. She killed herself and got an MA in one year, then started on the PhD in summer school. After completing MacFarlane's course in Old English and dropping a course entitled The Pursuit of Happiness, she was home again to get her bearings. Where were they? Certainly not at the convent. Mother Maloney was wearing a rust skirt and a round collared blouse which had been in style when Gretchen was an undergraduate. The heavy cross was nowhere to be seen. Her hair she had tried to wrench into a couple of spit curls over the ears. It was grey and very thin from being cooped up under a veil for so many years. She and Gretchen walked on the grounds and made coffee in the nuns' kitchen. Gretchen kept feeling embarrassed. It was as if she were seeing her friend undressed for the first time. "The only thing I'm sure of anymore is that God is," said Mother Maloney, who was now really Sister Maloney, because the nuns had changed that, too. "*Are* you?" Gretchen asked. "Yes," she said, "and I accept Christ as the son of God by Revelation. Farther than this I cannot go at the moment."

Adjoining the convent property was a majestic ante-bellum home with stables, which Gretchen's stepfather would not have the pleasure of demolishing for some time yet. It was being repainted and refurbished by a rival contractor. It sat splendidly on the crest of the hill overlooking mountain ranges on three sides and a river called the French Broad on the fourth. A Catholic bishop lived there. A Dalmation belonging to the bishop shot out from behind the stables and barked at the two women, but then he recognized Mother Maloney from her previous walks and slunk away, rather

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ashamed of himself. Mother Maloney and Gretchen sat down on the front steps of the house and looked pensively out at the French Broad. "Now when I go into stores, people don't pay special attention to me," Mother Maloney said, pleased. "I am not set apart or revered. I'm just an ordinary person. That's why I'm glad to be rid of the habit. Also it was hot and you never could hear properly behind the veil." "God," said Gretchen, "the habit was one of the reasons that attracted me most about being a nun." "Then you obviously didn't have a vocation," replied Mother Maloney, flicking a fly off Gretchen's brown leg. "I've just finished this marvelous book that everyone else read years ago," she said. "For a long time we couldn't read it because of the dirty words. But it's so wonderful. The little boy is so honest, just like today's teenagers. They just won't accept a lot of the institutions we have always put up with. Like at the Rejuvenation Meetings here last month... all the nuns in our order coming together from all parts of the world... the whole system's changing. It used to be that Reverend Mother's word was law. Now it's the word of the community. One young nun stood up and said to the liturgist, 'What's so sacred about black? Or brown? Or white? Why can't we be good women in polka dots or stripes?' And, you know, I found myself agreeing with her. Why not?" Gretchen said, "Those meetings sound interesting. You don't happen to have a tape recording of the Rejuvenation, do you?" "No," said Mother Maloney, "it was a private thing, after all." "Oh," said Gretchen, "well, what was the name of that book you were reading?" "It was called *Catcher in the Rye*," said Mother Maloney.

Gretchen's mother and grandmother came to get her at the convent. Gretchen's mother shielded her eyes from the sun, the better to frown at Mother Maloney. She bit her lip censoriously and shook her head. "I take it you don't approve of my outfit," said Mother Maloney cheerfully. "No I don't," said Gretchen's mother, who taught American History her way and Medieval Literature to the seniors at the convent. "Wait 'til school opens. I'm going to show up in a long black dress and veil to compensate for you all." "But this is much

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cooler," said Mother Maloney, smiling. She and Gretchen's mother were affectionate with each other in spite of their political and liturgical differences. Gretchen's mother was High Episcopal and looked down on the changing forms of the Catholic Church. Gretchen's grandmother, whose father had managed to keep most of his slaves after the War without paying them wages, called coolly from the car window: "How are you, Mother Maloney?"

After Gretchen kissed her friend good-bye for another year, and drove away in the back seat of her mother's station wagon, the grandmother said, "Her neck is wrinkled. She would have done better to stay behind that veil." Gretchen's mother ran her favorite red light saying, "Now what they need is Theresa of Avila. Gretchen, remember how in the fourteenth century when the Carmelites were acting up and getting all vain about their clothes, she swooped down on them and put them in their place?" "I have often thought of trying to write a play about her relationship with St. John of the Cross," ventured Gretchen from the back seat. "Why don't you start it this afternoon? You've got a whole hour before dinner," said her mother, who pushed her. Gretchen's former psychiatrist had told Gretchen: "Your mother has been quarterbacking your entire life."

Now the three generations of women were driving swiftly over a bridge. To the right was a Negro housing development all in pinks and lavenders and greens. It stretched as far as the eye would want to see. This land had once belonged to Gretchen's grandmother's father who married a hussy on his deathbed and left his land to this hussy who sold it to the Negroes. My grandmother is going to say her piece, Gretchen thought, and sure enough, at precisely that moment Gretchen's grandmother, still a pale and beautiful woman at seventy-seven, turned her profile to the pastel houses on the right and said sadly, "If Fran hadn't been such a hussy, we wouldn't have to drive past those awful houses now." "I have to stop by the damn supermarket," Gretchen's mother said, "and you know, no matter what I fix he won't be satisfied." Her mother's library books were digging into Gretchen's

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rear so she restacked them, examining the titles: SF Nebula awards, a novel called *Other Orbits* with a dust jacket from one of Hieronymus Bosch's more gruesome panels, and a book on the medieval mind. Gretchen flipped through this last one and found an article by Professor MacFarlane. She began to read. "You're going to ruin your eyes," her grandmother said through the rear-view mirror. Gretchen thought of Borges and Joyce and Homer and Milton and wished she could fall in love with a really good man.

Eating with the Marvell Chapmans went on and on forever. Gretchen loved to visit them, bussing to Chicago from her university, and talk and eat until she fell in bed hardly able to breathe for excitement over ideas. When Gretchen had first met Roxanne at the ambassador's house in Copenhagen, Roxanne had been on a diet. That was seven years ago. Since then, Gretchen could more or less measure the state of her friend's soul by whether or not she was on a diet. When Roxanne had had enough of the world, she stuffed herself with starches and candy until she was unable to get into her clothes. That would force her to stay inside while she sorted herself out. Then when she felt strong again (usually she was twenty or thirty pounds fatter) she would surface slowly back into time via a diet. Now that Roxanne had acquired a husband (a rather thin one) she made him go on her diets with her. After Roxanne was asleep, Marvell secretly read cookbooks. Now, on this visit of Gretchen's, they were on the best diet of all. It was one where you ate and ate and became thin as a Dachau prisoner. Certain foods burned up other foods and you just sat and stuffed and left chemistry alone to rearrange your figure. Gretchen and the Chapmans had been sitting for three hours at table, like a trio of Roman degenerates, having consumed

Two cans of Alaska sockeye salmon
Eight tomatoes, seasoned
Two onions, finely chopped
Sliced green peppers

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Sliced pimentos
Celery and mushrooms cooked in milk
Sliced cucumbers marinated in Sucaryl
("Don't you remember this from Denmark,
they served it everywhere," said
Roxanne.)
Fresca, with ice and glasses as an afterthought
("Marvell," said Roxanne, "just tell me
this: is it too much trouble for you
to get out the ice tray and the glasses?
If it is, just please say, 'Roxanne,
it's too much trouble for me to get out
the glasses and the ice tray,' and I will
do it myself." Marvell smiled and said,
"Roxanne, it's too much trouble for me
to get out the glasses and the ice tray.")

For dessert, Roxanne got out assorted spices, electric hand-beater, dried coffee, orange extract, Sucaryl, gelatin. She made a coffee jello topped with unfattening topping made from condensed milk, cinnamon, nutmeg and water. Gretchen said, "This is the best dessert I have ever eaten anywhere, ever." Later that night she flung herself exhausted from talk into the bed under the cubist painting and heard Marvell say to Roxanne "You know, she really meant it. It was the best dessert anywhere, ever." All marriages have their moments, thought Gretchen.

Roxanne came and lay down at the foot of Gretchen's bed. The Chapmans lived in a mammoth basement on West Bittersweet Ave., which had once been a famous Chicago cubist's studio. In return for leaving his huge canvases there, he let them have it for forty dollars a month. This had greatly helped them. Marvell could pay his root canal bill and Roxanne was able to pay off her lawyer who had gotten her off with monthly visits to a social worker after Roxanne had been apprehended for shoplifting a paperback book on women's rights from the bookstore of two queers.

"I'm exhausted, too," she said at the foot of the bed. "It's

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always fiercer when you're here. Although Marvell *will* verbalize everything. There are moments when I wish I was married to a bus driver."

"No you don't," said Gretchen, and the two of them giggled. Gretchen had told Roxanne about Sven and Barcelona.

"Will you be able to sleep all right tonight?" said Roxanne.

"Oh, I always sleep perfectly here," said Gretchen, "I don't even need a light on. You two are near enough to keep the bogeys away."

"What actually do you see? Is it with your eyes closed or open?" Roxanne asked.

"Open, I'm afraid. Well, once in England I saw a huge Negro in a loin cloth. He was sitting on the edge of my bed. I had dozed, then woke to feel this huge hand on my forehead. I knew it wasn't my husband's hand. Uh-oh, I said to myself, when I open my eyes I'm going to see something awful. But I opened them anyway and there he was. I decided I'd better talk to him, so I said (I'd been reading about archetypes): 'Are you the Great Father, then?' As soon as he answered I knew I'd made a mistake. I had addressed him as though he were part of my own imagination and, as such, would of course know who the Great Father was. But he just giggled wildly and said in scarcely human English, 'Yep, Ise de gret fadder,' and then he started to lie down and I knew he was going to rape me. At first I fought it, then I said to myself, Well he's going to do it anyway so I might as well not struggle, and I relaxed and then I realized I was actually looking forward to it. At that precise moment, he vanished."

"That must have been frustrating," said Roxanne.

Saturday was the last day of Gretchen's visit with her friends. After lunch, they set off in the sunshine to see *2001* again. As they waited for the A-train, Gretchen moaned, "I don't feel like going back there and teaching Renaissance poetry to two sections of undergraduates. I'm more in a medieval frame of mind. Back to miracle and mystery and all that."

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"You'll get over it," said Roxanne. "I always favored the Jacobean era. So doomed, so violent, so extreme."

The train came. They had to split up and sit separately. They were hurtled screamingly through a tunnel which seemed to fling giant sheets of aluminum foil at the windows, making an unholy racket. Gretchen looked up at the Traveler's Times Message of the Week, next to the advertisement for Excedrin. Secretly she was a sucker for messages, although artistically she abhorred them. Damn, damn, damn, she thought as she read this message, I'm going to have to write this down and I didn't bring any notecards. So she wrote in her checkbook, to be copied over later on a notecard

> I refuse to accept the idea that
> man is so tragically bound to
> the starless midnight of racism
> and war that the bright daybreak
> of peace and brotherhood can never
> become a reality.
>
> —Martin Luther King, Jr.

She looked over and saw Roxanne tapping her foot to some private music of her own. Why can't I just live, Gretchen wished. What if, far worse than being called to be a nun, I have been called to be the notecards on which my time is written? ("*A wise man must perceive*," MacFarlane translated aloud, "*how mysterious will be the time when the wealth of all this age will lay waste, just as now in diverse places throughout this earth walls are standing beaten by the wind and covered by rime...*") But it's so exhausting to be chronicling yourself every minute. I've got to have a breather. I've got to write myself purposely off the page for a while: "And Gretchen went to the movies with her friends and we will hear further from her when she comes out several hours later." Roxanne just lived. She got better looking as the years went on. She seemed annually to be gathering herself up towards an overwhelming personality. Gretchen remembered the evening of their first meeting at the American ambassador's house in Copenhagen. They were the only two single girls there. She

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and Roxanne were seated on either side of the Prison Warden of that city, whose name was Mr. Worm. Roxanne said, "I think Danish will become an extinct language pretty soon, don't you, Mr. Worm?" The poor man shook his head unhappily. "I don't hope so," he said. Oh God, I'd better cheer him up, Gretchen thought. She swallowed her mouthful of frickadeller and asked with great charm: "What is the most prevalent crime in Copenhagen, Mr. Worm?" "Oh stealing bicycles," he wailed and looked more depressed than ever.

After *2001*, Marvell, Roxanne and Gretchen took a safari round the windows of Marshall Fields. "I want to get a pair of thigh boots," said Roxanne. Then I will also need some very short boots to wear with the pants suits I'm going to get." Poor Marvell looked very pale. I'd better cheer him up, thought Gretchen. She said, "What do you think it meant? I still don't understand. What was the black slab? Why was Keir Dullea in that room at the end? If I could see it twice more, once with my ten-year-old half brother and once with Kurt Vonnegut, I think I could understand."

Roxanne slant-eyed another window of expensively dressed mannequins and said: "Man's eternal quest to get back where he started from: a space capsule, a Louis Fourteenth bedroom, a womb."

Stop! Gretchen told herself. Here's a good place to switch off for the day. I am not going to let it record one more item on my poor quivering consciousness.

But then when they got back to West Bittersweet, where the pile driver on a new high-rise apartment site was throbbing its heart out, deafening the passers-by, they saw a large crowd gathered on the sidewalk. "What's happened, I wonder?" Marvell said, and the three of them made their way into the crowd and saw a black girl at its center, dancing the Bugaloo all by herself to the beat of the pile driver. Before a minute had passed, Marvell, Roxanne and Gretchen had joined the crowd in clapping time to the beat.

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THE OPEN SECRET

BY HOWARD GREY

UH...THIS CONTRACTUAL...UH
YOU SEEM NERVOUS, MR. CHILD. CAN I GET YOU AN ASPIRIN?
MISS TATE, ISN'T THAT GARMENT A TRIFLE...UH ...SKIMPY?
IF YOU MEAN MY DRESS, IT'S AT LEAST AN INCH LONGER THAN SEVERAL GIRLS IN THE OUTER OFFICE.

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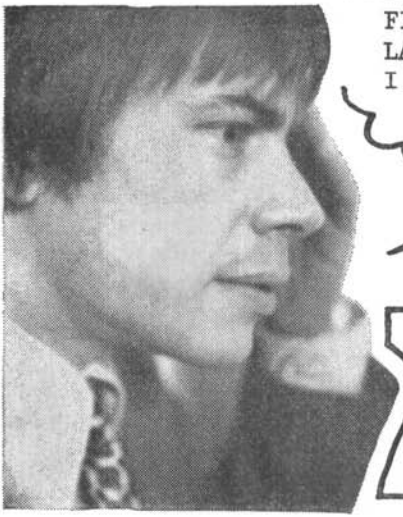
MR. CHILD TRIED, BUT...



FILE THOSE CONTRACTS LATER, MISS TATE. I CAN'T CONCENTRATE.

PREPARE A MEMO, MISS TATE. HEMLINES WILL COME DOWN IN THIS OFFICE AS OF TOMORROW.

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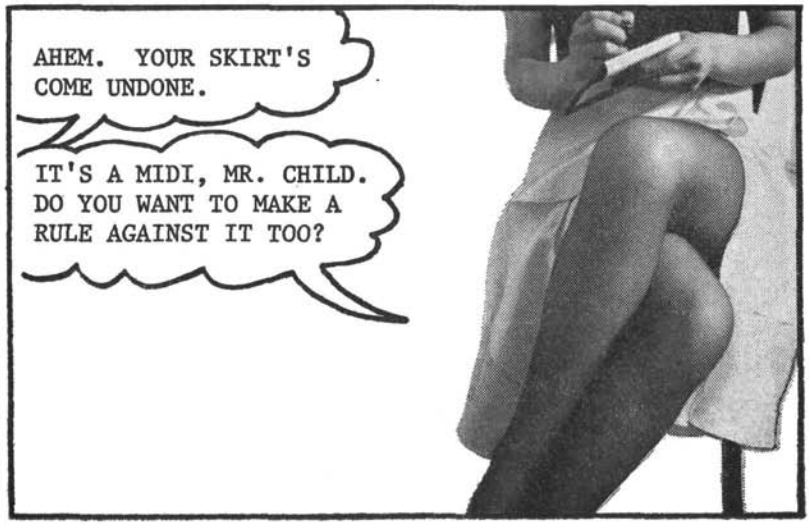

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THE FOLLOWING DAY, MR. CHILD WAS SURE HE COULD CATCH UP ON HIS BACKLOG OF WORK. AT LAST MISS TATE WAS CONSERVATIVELY ATTIRED.

MORNING, MR. CHILD.

M-M-MORNING, M-MISS TATE.

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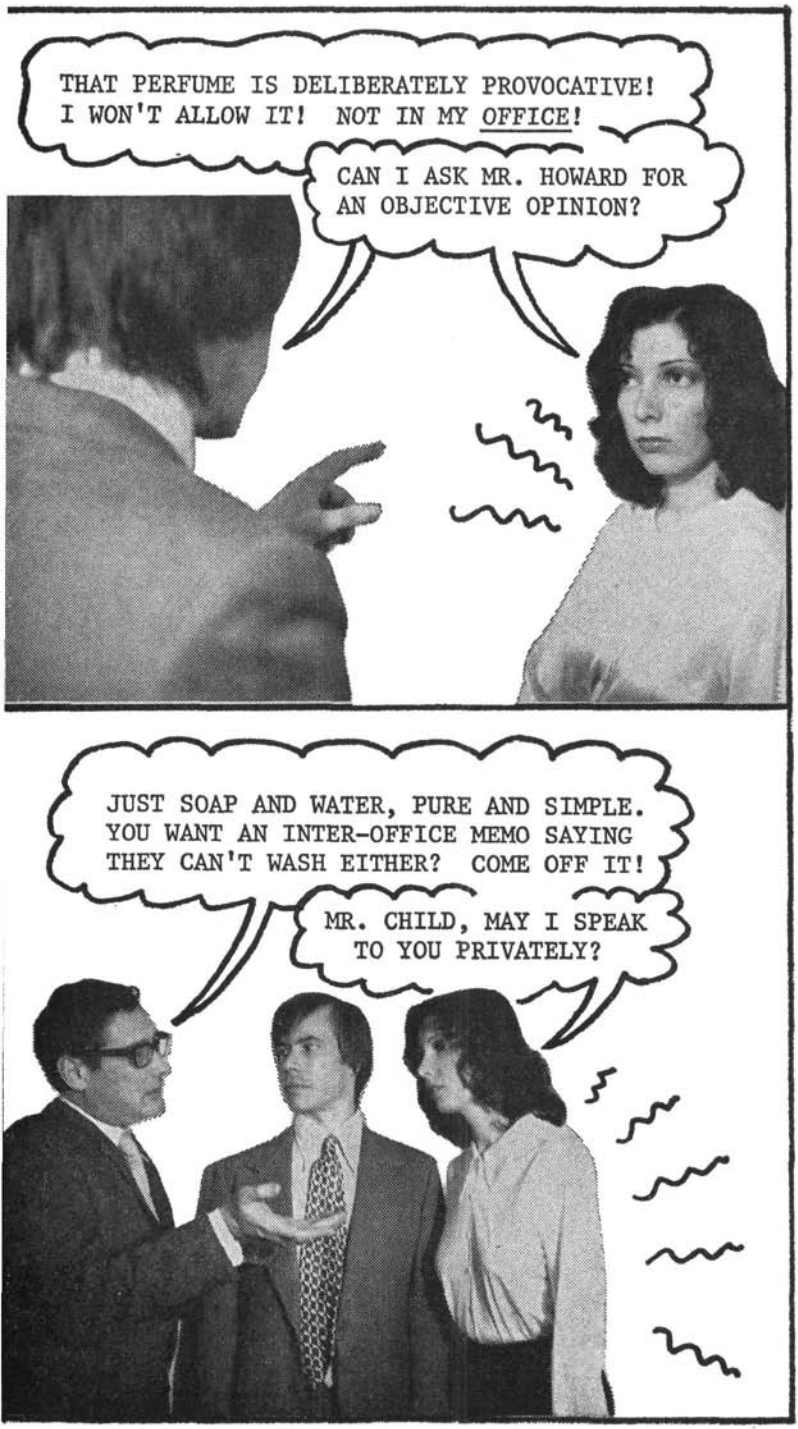
THAT PERFUME IS DELIBERATELY PROVOCATIVE! I WON'T ALLOW IT! NOT IN MY OFFICE!
CAN I ASK MR. HOWARD FOR AN OBJECTIVE OPINION?
JUST SOAP AND WATER, PURE AND SIMPLE. YOU WANT AN INTER-OFFICE MEMO SAYING THEY CAN'T WASH EITHER? COME OFF IT!
MR. CHILD, MAY I SPEAK TO YOU PRIVATELY?

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YOU'D BETTER GET YOURSELF ANOTHER SECRETARY. IT WOULDN'T MATTER IF I WASHED WITH LAUNDRY SOAP AND WORE A BURLAP SACK, I'D TURN YOU ON. AND FRANKLY, YOU HAVE THE SAME EFFECT ON ME.
I CAN'T KEEP MY MIND ON MY WORK EITHER.

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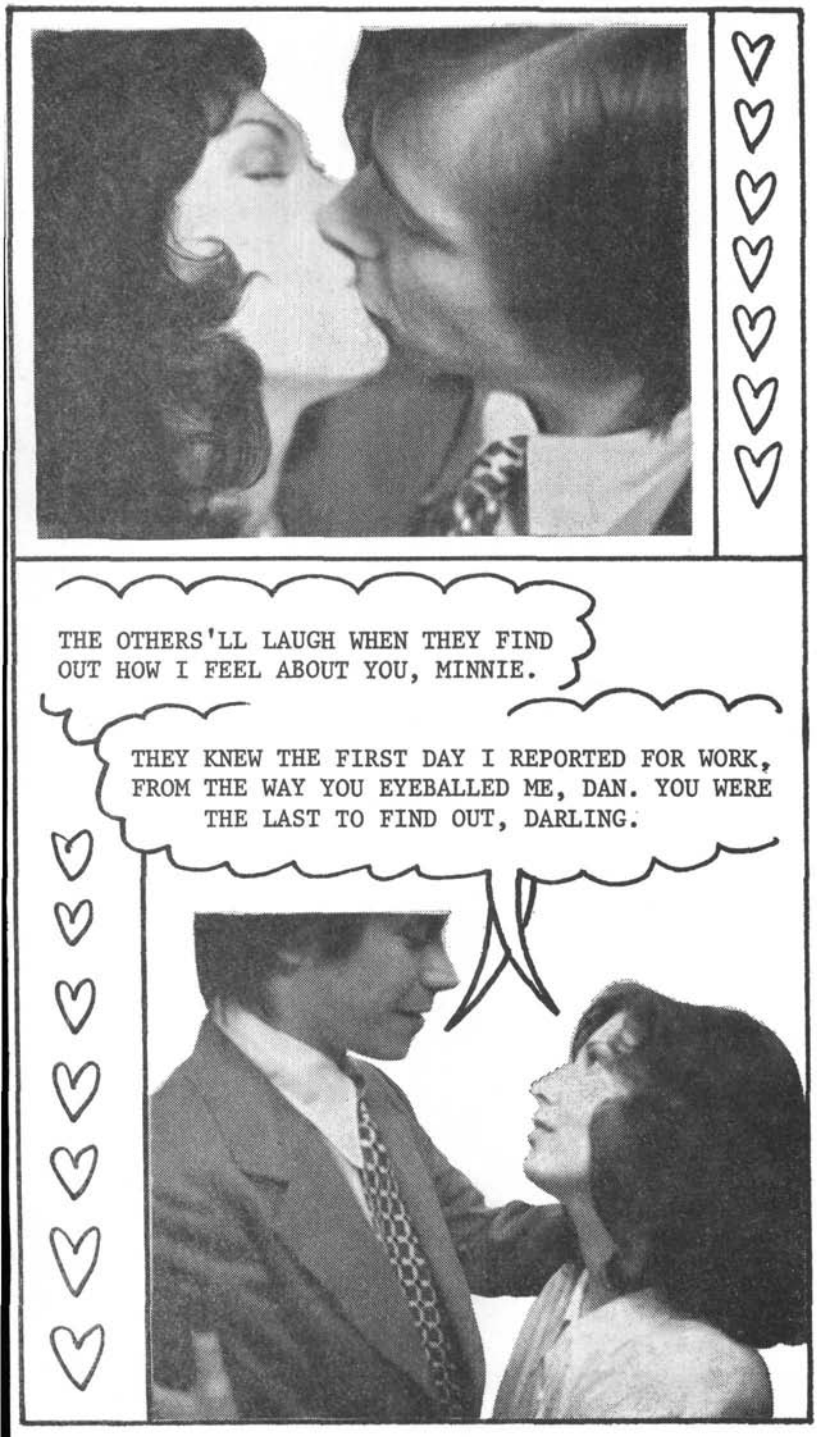
THE OTHERS'LL LAUGH WHEN THEY FIND OUT HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU, MINNIE.
THEY KNEW THE FIRST DAY I REPORTED FOR WORK, FROM THE WAY YOU EYEBALLED ME, DAN. YOU WERE THE LAST TO FIND OUT, DARLING.

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Tom Walsh

Ersatz Amour

turning a strand
of your hair in my fingers

had the certainty
of a penny clicking in a street
gutter. I am thinking

of a broken-down blue door
in a flop house.

I am kicking a foot
through a car window.

I am discovering a bedbug
where there should be a lake

I will take your hair and kiss it
with my trembling lips

No, I am climbing out a window,
I am not even with you

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Bellevue

Laying awake in how many beds
my tears like zinc petals

on my cheeks,
how many nights unable to sleep,
wintergreen, New York City

is a motorcycle gunning
in the darkness

Sleepless in Manhattan General
so much Thorazine can't
ease away

Still rumbling on
beneath girders & 3rd Ave.
I am dizzy
when no peace can come

Remembering sleeplessness,
Roosevelt Hospital,
the empty courtyard

Laying awake in how many beds
junkies & whores buzzing on 14th St.
how many nights

how many subway flights to tear away
this terror

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Faye Kicknosway

Our Gang: Ginger

Charles Lindbergh never danced with Ginger Rogers.
He wasn't a comedian even though he was
from Detroit. You'd see him
hanging out at the unemployment office after they took
his plane away to the museum, and he'd be talking of how

he never danced with Ginger Rogers. He blamed it—the automobile
at 6000 ft in the mid-Atlantic—on that, on all
those hours of no sleep, and being from Detroit, deprived of all
that American culture. (Charlie, this is only

a poem, and you're an American hero, an old reliable, sort of like
Hostess Twinkies or American cheese on white. We all
learn from you and copy you everyday before
our eleventh birthdays when we get our first
subscription to *True Confession* or *Playboy*. Charlie, you're

the excuse Mom said for eating all that oatmeal.) At 6000 ft, there
was your name in Senegalese and something broke.
Dates mixed; you could have been
Norman Mailer or Mary Baker Eddy. But you weren't. You were
an automobile, not even
the one millionth, not even
with bucket seats. Charles Lindbergh was
an automobile and would never dance with Ginger Rogers.

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The Austringer

Michael Rothschild

I

A taut woman, Edith Leon was of necessity a methodical woman. She could not abide the world to float about her as it chose. Mysteries, ambiguities, exacerbated her. So she retaliated. She marshaled the world into patterns. She embraced a System. First-born was Theory, but soon after came Idea, and lastly, Perception. The world ceased to float. The world was fixed, coherent, sensible as a bucket-brigade from a cistern.

Gestures, words, pictures, art—all became clues, surrogates, flares lit by the troubled in their darkness for those who could translate... so concluded Edith Leon, formerly college student of psychology, now translator of events, wife of Walter Leon, a clothier, and mother of Warren, a clever and disturbing young doodler.

Years before she had gathered together Warren's abandoned high-school texts, flyleaves littered with grinning birds about to kill, killing, or having killed grinning fish. In a small black booklet concealed in a dresser beneath Warren's socks and underwear she unearthed a sequence resembling the hieroglyphs of an ancient ceremonial tomb. Page after page was populated by a breed of men whose foreheads

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sloped without indentation to acutely angular nose-tips. Most of the faces were in profile. Lips were singularly thin with slight downward turns at the mouth. Eyes were ovoid and large, encasing circular, uncolored pupils. The eyes lacked brows and lashes. But the most shocking particular was their martial helmets—falcons with dark lizard eyes peered over human heads until headpiece fused to head and falcons nested in human brains.

A mutation resulted towards the end of the booklet. The fine skull structures of the men broadened; their noses coarsened and hooked down, eclipsing their thin lips. Their rounding eyes blackened and shone from either side of a strongly cleft curling beak. The headdress had become the head and it sat on a thick-ribbed human trunk.

Bristling with evidence Edith Leon had brought the drawings to her husband. The fact Warren drew pictures pleased Walter Leon from the start. He owned a garment shop for ladies and alone fashioned its window displays. The den, a square wooden caboose coupled to their brick house, was his design. To his specifications the rich wood had been tongue-and-grooved; he had chatted supervisions to a plodding carpenter over his own blueprints, and afterwards spent early evenings reclined in his creation, scanning garment bulletins beneath a sunken ceiling beam. That Warren drew pictures was natural.

Edith insisted they were abnormal pictures. Her hazel eyes flagging urgency and a paucity of iodine, she unraveled what she deemed her son's "fanatical hatred of fish and fowl." As proof of and perhaps antidote to his malady, they would purchase animals, install animals in their house, and observe Warren's responses. She had decided to purchase two goldfish and one parakeet.

Edith watched, but Warren took little notice of the racket issuing from the wire-bell birdcage or the goldfish bowl set on the television beside the miniature cactus. She did her best to give the fishbowl appeal: besides the two fish, Edith anchored a gray ceramic castle and deep-sea diver in an inch of smooth purple and blue pebbles. Nonetheless, Warren

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declined to feed the fish. Daily the fish rose to the tiny flakes Edith salted on the surface of the water. Warren did not watch the fish. Each day Edith sat for a time before the bowl while the fish hung in the water waving their tails, their mouths opening and closing. The bowl became gray, and meandering strings of white excrement trailed the fish. In an effort to clean the murky bowl, Edith dumped the water down her kitchen sink. The fish hopped from the poured water, eluded her net, and were lost flipping and slapping in the well of her grinding garbage disposal.

The parakeet fared better. Edith named the turquoise and yellow bird Cuckoo and elaborately outfitted his cage with diversions and obstacles: bells of seed, ringing bells, wooden and plastic perches, oblong beak-sharpeners, mirrors, a ladder, a removable sandpaper floor for droppings, a snowman-like swinging clown with spring legs for butting, and an embroidered gauze blanket to ease the darkness—Cuckoo wanted nothing. Edith spent hours talking to the bird as he bobbed before a mirror and picked his perch. Gradually his random chirps, yells and squacks abated and a limited but intelligible jabber emerged. Cuckoo bid Edith good morning and evening and all the day said prettypretty in a high voice.

Late evenings—there was silence intermittently splintered by the shrill fixed voice of the parakeet. Edith slept in the den, pale in the spotlight of the ceiling beam. Cuckoo perched on her collarbone, his head cocked to the side, quizzically. Edith's lids masked her eyes into coyness. There they slept, Edith's eyes ajar slightly, Cuckoo's purple lids perfectly sealed.

Had Edith Leon been a sibyl as well as a translator of events and seen Warren hunched over an attic desk in the cricket-ridden country night of future years, had she seen his desk piled with books entitled: *Birds of Prey*, *The Misunderstood Raptores*, *The Noble Art*, *Hawking for You*, and *The Complete Falconer*, and known that he had a fitted doeskin gauntlet, a rawhide-wrapped metal perch and lacked nothing but a hawk, she would have celebrated the confirmation of her System, her Theories, her Ideas, and her Perceptions.

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And had she known her son's rapture as he perused his maroon drawing book (particularly the entries he imagined to resemble a sequined lady releasing herself from the trapeze, somersaulting in the air and at the last moment clutching the steel forearms of a gent in caramel-colored tights, his thighs squeezing a swinging perch) how jubilant her own celebration would have been: a speck hangs high on the top of Warren's page; below, a dun partridge flushes from a green copse. The speck enlarges, a falcon banks, surveying and dives, its wings pulled tight, unclear for its speed, like a comet. In a brown circle of detached quills the smaller predator penetrates the partridge with hooked hands clenched, binds to, and drops the stunned bird, watching its graceless tumbling descent. On the ground the black-headed falcon rests on the brown body, dips its toothed beak and with an abrupt twist, unlinks two neck vertebrae. The sharp wings of the falcon encircle the partridge breast, mantling. Again the black head dips, depluming the short tan chest feathers. Cleaned, the breast meat is white and prickled. The final picture shows the falcon still straddling the vermilion bird, a thick neck, crop packed with the whiteness of breast meat—had Edith Leon but an inkling such acrobatics were to be performed in her son's brain she should have leapt from the sofa tousling her short gray hair and fixed her turbid eyes on the mantic black eyes of her parakeet. Understanding, the birdlet would have fattened his brindled gorgelet and chanted in horrified unison, morbidWarrenmorbidWarrenmorbid-Warren, with the toxic roteness of a conscience.

II

Warren courted Gretel throughout the snowstorms, sleet, hail, sun and warm downpour of March, wooing her with sketches of her naked torso. She posed on a stool between the silver-painted radiator and the gas stove. Her toes curled around the dowel supporting the stool legs. Sometimes she wrapped a fuchsia-and-gray-banded blanket around her

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waist and goose-fleshed thighs. She fanned her arms and undulated her body, embellishing the description of her day: the expedition to the toilets where small girls flapped their arms and were angels, the boys side-winding beside in a separate line, miming snakes. How Denise may or may not have stolen Randy's milk dime. Crystal's right eye swollen shut.

Gretel's wavy brown hair filled the deep V scoops between her collarbone and neck, hanging down her pale back in uneven lengths. Her breasts seemed larger for the fineness of her rib cage. Balanced on a dark but sparse line of down, her navel protruded slightly and the jutting tips of her pelvis deepened the grooves that outlined her pubic crest. She liked the way Warren concentrated, whisking a charcoal stick over his large tablet or pausing to rub the stick on sandpaper and blow away black powder; his irritation in rolling a caramel block of eraser on an errant line until gray twists cluttered the floor.

Art school was teaching Warren an architectured human body—how the skull was a dome capping clavicles and scapulae which provided awning for the rotunda of ribbery; how the pelvis (secondary supports) snugly socketed balled pillars, the whole resting upon the arches of the feet. With the mind of his studies Warren erected queer and gabled human buildings. He rubbed his lines into what he called "shadow studies," blurred to the degree his pages appeared spat upon and licked. Once charcoaled in his sketch pad, Gretel's ruddy nipples became dead as cigar ashes; her torso, the same that hung from wire and stocked shelves and tables of his studio classroom—gesso-trunks of classical statuary.

Warren avoided his lectures. He skipped studio instruction. His pictures only changed, and changed abruptly, the first of April when Gretel blandly said, as if describing the daffodil sachet her principal Mrs. Winkeller stashed in the right side of her bosom, that she was not having her periods.

The chiaroscuro human building of his studies began to quake. Construction blocks that dunked, twisted and tilted on sagittal, horizontal and transverse planes split, crumbled.

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Like a child who in play has so earnestly erected a castle of wooden blocks, Warren, with a sweeping blow, toppled the spires and turrets, cleaved the pyramidal base of the classroom thumb from the balled middle, cleaved the balled middle from the pear-shaped tip and like a child found more mirth in the collapse than the construction. Secretly he purchased a box of crayons and with bright primary colors roped by fat black lines, started her pregnancy.

For five days he made pictures of the changes he supposed her childbearing body would manifest. As the embryo enlarged, her stomach skin stretched taut and blued. At the last Warren drew the bulge as something discrete; sometimes a fantastic saffron balloon or a transparent globe veined with waterways, whitish land masses, oceanic; sometimes buffed, a mirrored sphere reflecting the sky, the silver bars of the radiator. The fifth day a delivery was imminent. The navel had popped out long and straight like the stem of a great hard blue fruit.

At night Warren's fingertips tested her unchanging nipples, his palm alert for wetness. His ear, cradled between her hips, listened to the snaps and squeals of her digestion. He bought newspapers and analyzed the classified sections. Warren scanned job opportunities and realized he did not know how to do anything. He tried to imagine a distributor cap. Through green goggles he saw his hands solder together pieces of copper tubing, stitch uppers to shoe soles, adjust the floating balls in backs of toilets. One morning, a week before Gretel's kindergarten classes ended, he went so far as introducing Warren Leon, window stylist, to Mr. Ransom, proprietor of the Swallow Shop.

Ransom told Warren he had done it himself once a week for fourteen years. He pressed his flattened palm on the speckled tie over his breastbone and said his heart was the reason. He led Warren through a drab green-curtained dressing room in the back of his shop, down stairs into a dim basement, a long corridor with small perpendicular recesses. The cellar walls were brick and fieldstone chinked and patched with concrete. The air was damp and water trickled between the

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black stones. Ransom pointed out a workbench to the right backed with shelves of odd tools and spattered paint cans. They passed the alcove of the boiler, the toilet-paper and light-bulb closet.

The prop room was at the remote end of the cellar. The props were in crates and boxes marked by seasons. Ransom said his summer merchandise had arrived and that Warren should "center on brights." Together they would coordinate the summer windows and display cases. What they needed, explained Ransom, was a bouncy summer panorama—all macintosh red, grapefruit yellow and tangerine. "Geared" to lure people in off the wet streets for a taste of summer. He coughed into a paisley handkerchief and left Warren alone in the basement with the crates containing the seasons of the year.

Warren opened an enormous box marked AUTUMN. It was stuffed with picket fences, vines of red and yellow leaves, a blackboard announcing "Back to School Days" and a brilliant orange and green plastic pumpkin. Under the leaves Warren saw a rigid brown hook. He dislodged it by the tail, a brown Airedale dog with a broken ear and a scarlet collar and leash. Placing the dog aside he opened SUMMER. It contained fish nets, opaque green and red glass bubbles, sand dollars, sea shells and fragile crab bodies. A second box was layered with bathing caps growing soft rubber flora, scaled bathing caps, and sandals. The brown, red, gold and black hairpieces and wigs beneath, shiny and coarse, blanketed a tangle of legs and fingers. The hands were poised to offer a harlequin scarf, a beaded handbag with a yellow flower. One of the legs was chipped and revealed a wire bone. Another had been repainted on the calf with an orange in uncomfortable contrast to the pink-fleshed original. The bald lower half of a mannequin, its right buttock impaled on the metal shaft of a stand, rose out of a red-berried holly wreath in the WINTER crate.

Warren never returned to the Swallow Shop from his first lunch hour. In a glass cubicle around the corner he phoned Walter Leon long-distance to secure a large check for the

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summer. From the booth he jogged the entire way to Maple Street School. There, through the chicken-wired window of a door befuddled Warren was watching Gretel chalk H and h above rows of tiny heads when a grimacing squat woman, overwhelming with flower smells, eyes ever-alert for a molester, asked aggressively, "Mister, are you looking for someone?" Warily, "Excuse me, ...Mister, can I help you?"

III

From the attic space serving as his studio/study Warren surveyed his rented domain. Behind the farmhouse twenty or so acres of thistle and witchgrass tangled to a blighted elm in the ravine. He could not see beyond the fir-tops behind a knoll of pine seedlings planted in rows, but after her hike Gretel reported that the meanders of a stream, high for the rainy June and tawny for the pulp mill in Starks, described the far boundary of their land.

Much as he began it, Warren concluded his first week of country life—gazing across the field through the tortuous branches of the elm. This elm towered so foolishly barren amidst the lush ravine, so gloomily contrived with the plump raven squatting on the remains of a limb, that he devised through its branches the busyness of a Bruegel winterscape: on the knolltop he set a kerchiefed woman to collect faggots; in the left foreground, weary hunters waded through drifts of snow; sharp-chested hounds poked their muzzles into snow-crust near a fire; the ravine was a frozen canal where boys played hockey.

Suddenly one incongruous boy braved the chill dressed in a striped green and yellow jersey. He ambled down the knoll of seedlings, across the skating canal and vanished behind the elm trunk. His torso emerged from the ravine, arms waving away Warren's winterscape, waving up at Warren in the window.

Hurriedly Warren turned from the window. His back

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parallel to the slope of the hewn roof timbers, he moved to his desk by the brick chimney cutting through the attic floor. He opened the great maroon drawing book. With quick flicks of his pencil he scattered sharp-angled bird and fish shapes over the page. The fish were rudimentary, much like capital Y's fallen on their side or else snatched from the alphabet by primitive birds whose heads contained a broad parabolic grin. It was apparent the birds felt quite correct impaling the fish and the fish had no misgivings in being killed by such birds.

Voices and the splutter of an engine lured Warren back to the window. Gretel was pacing out the size of her garden plot below in giant steps. A bald man astride a quivering rust-orange tractor concurred by nodding his corded neck. The boy in the striped green and yellow jersey leaned on a glacial boulder nearby and watched. His stiff reddish hair covered his forehead and shaded his beaked nose. Perhaps he was twelve or thirteen. Gretel completed the outline and piled her thick brown hair on her head to catch the breeze on the back of her neck. A sleeveless ruby shell molded her unbridled breasts into the gentlest curve. The boy sat cross-legged in the sun chewing a blade of grass, his back against the boulder.

The wedged blade dropped and the machine traced Gretel's steps, turning up heavy overlapping lines of black earth. The plowman was exceedingly serious and neat. He checked his progress behind. Shortly a small dark rectangle was notched in the gnarled field. The farmer stopped the noise of his engine and walked stiffly up to Gretel. He squatted, picked up some dirt and for a quarter of an hour all Warren managed to intercept were the fragments: "sure to crop your tomato suckers," "three to a hillock," "nothin' like bloodmeal," and a preening invitation, "visit my pigeon house." The boy rose to join them, his arms folded on his chest. The farmer laughed (how pointless, causeless, laughter appears from a distance, scowled Warren from one window corner), daubed his neck with a blue sheet of a handkerchief and remounted his machine. He aimed his tractor at Warren, idled and shouted over his engine to Gretel, "Don't expect too much the first time.

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It'll be alot better next year when all this rots. I'll be by to harrow in the mornin'," and he steered his jolting machine over the clotted field to the road.

Gretel squinted up at the attic, her hands curved along the lines of her dark eyebrows. It was too late for Warren to remove his head from behind the window frame. "Warren, come outside." The boy smiled widely into the lowering sun. "A minute," said Warren. He slanted past the chimney toward the stairway, paused at the top of the stairs to gather himself, and descended.

"This is Anthony," Gretel said, "he wants to know if we have any odd jobs for him." Anthony sat on the pepper-speckled granite porch steps and examined Warren. Incest, decades of inbreeding finally produced such eyes, thought Warren. Wide rubberoid lids masked half Anthony's eyes giving the impression of an ocular drift into the forehead, a fear he was about to swoon or was preparing a backwards somersault. With index finger and thumb of his right hand Anthony kneaded some flesh on the left underside of his chin, his head cocked to one side. He scanned the shabby lawn and said, "Looks like you wanna have your lawn mowed. I mow lawns you know."

"No, I didn't," said unhappy Warren trying to lift his mouth corners into an inquisitive yet sympathetic smile.

"I do," said Anthony flatly.

"Do you have a lawn mower?"

"Nope."

"Well, I don't have one."

Anthony eyed Warren, shrugged, hung his left hand over his right shoulder and walked down the driveway to the road scratching his shoulder blade.

Warren sensed Gretel was now sucking her soft inner lips tight to her long incisors in her conception of a glare. The looks she gave him! He had first glimpsed her lips' enviable gift of contortion when she brought Crystal, a sullen red-haired five-year-old into their apartment. Pressed under Gretel's arm was a stack of finger paintings by her kindergarten children. Crystal and Gretel proceeded to thumbtack

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his olive kitchen into a garish quilted tent. Warren had scuttled into the bedroom and closed the door. Together Gretel and Crystal looked at the pictures and talked about cows, gardens, chickadees and cats. Wearied of listening behind the door Warren opened it a slit and beheld Gretel and Crystal spooning flesh-colored chunks from a carton of peach ice cream. Gretel had raised her eyes and of a sudden, cinched her mouth into a miraculous spasm of triumph, antagonism, repulsion, willfulness and cold ice cream.

This face in particular Warren remembered. He sat on the steps and fingering the warm granite said, "What did you want me to do?" He looked up for an answer and saw Gretel's back, arms akimbo, hands girding her waist, retreating to the garden. "He didn't even have a lawn mower," reasoned Warren.

Gretel straddled a black corrugation of earth, bowed and commenced throwing stones and mats of turf outside the garden's perimeter. She was tugging at an obdurate root when Warren shouted, "Do you want to abort right in the middle of the garden?" Without turning, Gretel shot her right arm erect in an obscene gesture, re-clutched the root and with a heave wrenched it from the ground.

Catching herself on her knees feeling the garden in darkness for rocks, Gretel laughed softly through her nose. The clouded moon was nearly full-circle. Except for the amber rectangle of the attic window the farmhouse was gray against the moving black clouds. She straightened, arched and pressed her thumb-pads into the knotted small of her back. Before her like a colossal antler, the black elm pronged the sky. Muscles in her shoulders and along her spine were badly cramped. She sauntered toward the farmhouse alternately kneading and drumming her back with her knuckles.

Far up the road she heard the approaching drone of a truck. A pale beam of light curved into the night. Just before the logging truck rumbled past she sighted the silhouette of a bicyclist peddling along the opposite roadside. Momentarily,

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Anthony was washed in the truck's headlights, one hand on a fringed handlebar, the other hanging lax by his thigh. In the scarlet of the truck's wake both his hands gripped the streaming handlebars. He was peddling strenuously, his buttocks pumping off the seat, his neck extended low. The truck shifted gears and Gretel watched it return Anthony to an umbra racing the shadows of the roadside. A fine rain sounded pleasantly as it patted the grass. The wind blowing from the knoll of seedlings strengthened.

Gretel went inside and paused by the shed door. Warren's footsteps tread the attic floor. She slipped into the bathroom and closed the door. A shiny disc of metal nailed above the porcelain washstand (a peephole of a mirror discouraging all but the piecework of shaving and hair-tweezing) reflected the reddish-brown smudges highlighting Gretel's cheekbones. Her face had been smeared by her fingertips in the garden, pushing her pesky hair away, fastening it behind her ears. Her bare feet and her hands were stained with dirt. She undressed, turned the spiky shower as hot as she could bear and stepped under it, her chin on her chest, waiting for her muscles to unstring. The doorknob turned and Warren's head popped from behind the plastic shower curtain, smiling vaguely in the humid shower mist. "How do you feel?"

"Sore," said Gretel, twisting water out of her hair. She shut her eyes, threw back her head and let the water bounce off her face and shoulders. Rivulets streaked between her breasts, hung on her belly and dropped in a steady stream from the pointed hair between her thighs.

"Like a hothouse here," offered Warren. The door reclosed and Gretel began to turn the soapbar in her hands, working a lather.

A hard rain slanting through the open attic window darkened the floor. Warren shut the window and sat idly thumbing through *Birds of Prey and Art*, a tome tracing raptorial art from the petroglyphs of Lascaux through bird-souled Egyptian relics to Tranquillo Cremona's somber canvas, "Il Falconiere, or Love and Jealousy," depicting a woman guardedly resting on a mustachioed picaroon's chest while his

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irked falcon, uneasily jessed to his raised gloved fist, beats the dusky air around them. Disquieting rain was tinkling steadily on the window glass.

In the sauna-like bathroom below, Gretel bent over, her stringy wet hair nearly hanging to the linoleum floor. She wrapped a towel around the back of her head and straightened, adroitly fashioning a turban. She rubbed the clouded metal disc to see herself and opened the door. Steam rushed into the kitchen. She wiped the moisture from the bathroom window with her wet towel. Her body felt nicely spent. In the clearing window she held out her arms and gyrated them in small circles, enjoying her turbaned nakedness. Moving closer to the window, she flexed her jaws open and closed. She started. Her face's reflection did not correspond to her face. Anthony's unabashed lidded eyes peered through the streaked glass. His wet hair was matted on his forehead, his sharp nose flattened against the outside glass.

Gretel did not overtly acknowledge him. She powdered herself, unwound the turban and ruffled her hair briskly with a towel. Uneasy, she at last pulled the string overhead, shutting the light off.

Long after midnight Warren slipped into bed beside Gretel who half-turned, murmured and covered her head with his pillow. He folded his hands over his stomach and readied for the interminable hodge-podge of episodes, unwinding installments "to be continued" after his somnambulant return from the water faucet or the bathroom still faint with Gretel's lilac-scented talc.

He experimented with methods of falling asleep: he aligned his inhalation with sleeping Gretel's; opposed her exhalation with his inhalation; ignored all her night sounds. This failing, he waited for a distant engine noise to mount, braced himself during its brutal climax (its light show skimming across the ceiling and down the wall) and relaxed as it diminished leaving the sough of Gretel's lungs and unperturbed open mouth.

Finally he dreamed, of a hilltop, of making love on a ferruginous shaggy woman. They trundled over and over, laughing down the fielded slope, hugging through goldenrod and

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lupin, rolling into the river that appeared below. Together they splashed and whipped the water into excitement. They ran up the hill, hands clasped. Asthmatic Warren paused to powerfully sneeze into a gaudy tiger lily.

Gretel imperiously strode over the hillcrest, heavy with laundry. My children, she said, I will teach you to wash clothes in the old way, pounding dirt away on the stones of the river. Warren scampered himself and his increasingly hirsute lover into the suddenly available and vacant abode of a subterranean animal.

Gretel spotted movement on the hillside. Resplendent in scarlet jacket, golden buttons and white silk stock shirt, she raised a brass horn to her pursed lips and brayed a metallic ta-ta-ta-ta. Hordes of unkempt dog-faced children, their frothy tongues elongated and broadened charged up the hill. Master of hunt Gretel led the hallooing phalanx; on either side, whippers-in Crystal and Anthony flailed the grass.

Sconced deep in their den, the furry succubus massaged Warren's jangled spine to calm him. Gretel glowered one hundred jeering eyes of fifty indignant heads over the hole's edge. Warren turned to his conspiratress. She was gone! Warren was alone.

With the intrepid grin of a conjurer, Warren greeted the vituperative mouths that defined the circumference of the hole. He doffed his posh beaver top-hat, ran his index finger around the monogrammed pigskin sweatband, and rapped the inner crown. Waving his outstretched palm over the brim, Warren the Wizard produced by the scruff of its neck a ferruginous fox puppy. Simultaneously, the puppy's yips and struggles established Warren's innocence and its own authenticity. A final rallying flourish of Gretel's plangent horn shrilly abridged Warren's private cinema.

Outside a horn honked. The front door slammed. It was noon. The bedroom was dark except for a blue strip of sky between the incompletely drawn green canvas shade and the window sill. The room was damp from the night of rain. Warren resolved to vacate the rumpled bed, extricate himself from his gluey pajama bottoms, dress and welcome the day.

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He pulled on green flannel trousers he had bought especially for the country and his green billiard-cloth shirt. He scratched his stubbled cheeks and walked to the bathroom where in the circular shiny metal, gruesome histrionics accompanied his piston-like toothbrush movement.

No sooner had Warren dropped the flannels to his ankles, lifted his shirt-tongues and become warmly situated on the horseshoe of the toilet than a queer-voiced, "Hello? hello?" sounded in the kitchen. Grumpily, Warren hitched his trousers. He opened the door to his own piqued head twinned in the mirror-like sunglasses that sealed the trespasser's eyes.

"She wants you," said ubiquitous Anthony. "Down to the garden." Wetness darkened his dungarees up to his crotch and his fists were wadded in his pockets.

"Tell her I'll be right down," grumbled Warren. The taciturn intermediary did not budge. "Tell her now," Warren ordered and he slammed himself in the bathroom and doused his face with cold water.

Three curled wisps of cloud, the only marks in the bright sky, raced high above the rotting elm. Gretel was standing beside Anthony, the reddish tip of his cowlick level to the lobe of her ear. They watched the farmer harrow the garden. Rows of tiny wheels masticated the caked ground behind the machine. The wind that blew from the firs over the pine knoll and soaked fields was sharp and cold. Warren swished through the tall wet grass to Gretel's back. Her hair was plaited against her bleached denim jacket, an image of severity to Warren. He nodded to the farmer.

The farmer, no longer civil as from the attic window, wore a red-and-black checked hunting cap and coat. He jounced sourly in his seat, featureless if not for hispid ears and nostrils.

Warren hauled Gretel by the elbow to the flat boulder at the side of the garden. He began, with despondent intensity, from text: "Inbreeding. The son of his father and his older sister, herself the daughter of dad's first cousin—only such a combination could spawn..."

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"Dougal's got a bird," interjected Gretel.

"Only an impoverished gene pool could result..."

"A goshawk."

"Who the hell is Dougal?" asked Warren, his query draining all impetus from his projected tirade.

Gretel pointed to the farmer who had shut off his clanking engine and was inspecting the steaming nose of his tractor.

Warren loped across the muddy garden and obliquely, accosted Dougal. "My wife tells me you keep hawks?"

"Nope."

Warren ebbed. Old MacDonald, he thought, was of the same impervious and mutant stock as Anthony. Perhaps an uncle. "You don't have a hawk then?"

"Yep, I do."

Warren sufficiently restrained the impulse to cudgel confused or contrary MacDougal to inquire, "How much will you take for him?"

"Her. And she ain't for sale just yet," said morose and inscrutable Donald, fiddling under the orange hood of his machine.

"I don't understand," confessed Warren.

"Look buddy, that damn gossuck has gone and killed my best male pigeon this mornin'. She got caught up inside the chicken wire. In a day or two you can have all that's left of her."

"I'll give you twenty-five dollars now."

"Nope."

"At least could I take a look at her?"

"Suit yourself," said Dougal, "I'll be home after I harrow the Poulin's late this afternoon."

Formerly, in his preparations to become a falconer, Warren had wandered far, wrapped in a mantle of sable pelts, cantering a coily Arabian stallion over endless dunes, a hooded peregrine balanced on his sure fist. His perusals of falcon lore had resulted in his creation of a gyral sickle-winged enchanter performing thousands of feet above his head. In the laby-

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rinthine castle Gioja del Colle he had discussed avian peculiarities with Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, the weather best to fly at herons. But now Warren was fixed in his peregrinations, assigned by the *Boke of St. Albans* not to be a King with his Gerfalcon, a Knight with a fierce Saker, not even to a Squire with his Lanner or the Lady's magical Merlin. Feudal hierarchy cast Warren down, down, halting him a rung below the insipid Young Man with his Tree Falcon. Truly, Warren could no longer be termed a falconer at all. He was but a Yeoman, his bird a short-winged hawk.

The Noble Art, a morocco-bound volume by Colonel Humphry Melmoth, further elucidated: "We usually call a hawker, he who keeps a Goshawk, an austringer [from the Fr. autour, Lat. astor, austor]—certainly not a true Falconer." Warren salvaged only a grim comfort from a photograph opposite the frontispiece of the dapper uniformed author (a petite goateed man holding a snowy gerfalcon as large as his chest, shoulders and head).

Such salient data did Warren the Yeoman cull from his books after his gloomy return from Dougal's farm. That night he subdued his anxiety studiously gleening goshawk facts in his attic lair. He wrestled the wily strategems that teemed in his head as to how he might burgle barbaric Dougal's farmhouse, how he might rescue his captive Gos.

The earlier visit to see his hawk was infelicitous from the start. Vengeful Dougal's beagle, a rotund arthritic dog with a violent temper and underbite had hobbled up to Warren and quite without warning shredded the left leg of his new flannel trousers. Warren had sought refuge through a paunchy screen door. A wizened woman in a long gingham dress was flattening dough into a circle on the kitchen table. Audaciously, without looking at Warren she said, "Don't you worry, Poker don't bite."

"Where could I find Mr. Dougal, Ma'am," asked assiduous Warren in his most restrained tones, peeking all the while about the room for hawk traces.

"In the barn," said the woman. The flesh on her arms rolled loosely with her motion.

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Warren had located Dougal pitching hay before the serried pink noses of spotted cows. He glanced at Warren and forked on while the big-eyed cows lowed impatiently, intermittently plapping pies of dung into the concrete grooves behind them.

Warren waited for ten minutes. His eyes puffed and watered from the hay and he began to sneeze. Finally Dougal walked up to him and said, "Hay fever? What can I do for you, Mister?"

Warren gazed through his tears at distorted Dougal and wheezed incredulously, "About the bird."

"Oh, you're the gossuck fella," and he walked past Warren toward his house. The gouty dog snarled. Warren hastened after its master into the kitchen where the woman was filling the browned piecrust with a viscous yellow substance. Dougal opened a door in the hall and led Warren down a flight of stairs into darkness.

He pulled a string and a light bulb illuminated the moldy stone-walled cellar with its earthen floor. A giant gray wood furnace radiated a tangle of smokestacks, the tentacles of a galvanized octopus. Dougal ducked his head under an angular stack, walked on a plank around the furnace and pulled another light cord.

"In here, root cellar," said the farmer, pointing to a wooden door. He opened the door and stood outside. His burly frame filled the jamb. On tiptoe peeping over Dougal's shoulder, Warren saw the glint of translucent orange eyes. In a silver-brown flash the bird lunged at unflinching Dougal from an oak chopping block. The hawk came to the end of its nylon tether and jerked to the ground at Dougal's boots. She convulsed. With a din of slapping chaotic wings she flounced over and over, seizured. The bird's brindled brown chest heaved. One of her wings was awkwardly extended, the other tucked tight.

Just as suddenly as she had bated and convulsed, her spasms subsided. The hawk's torrid eyes grew torpid, filmed by a nictitating membrane. Warren noticed her dome feathers were either frayed or missing. In their place rose a tonsure the

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shade of dried blood. Dougal slid the bird into the cellar with a soft kick and shut the door.

"What have you done to her head?" asked Warren to Dougal's calves as he trailed him up the stairs.

"Nothin'."

"Don't tell me you found her that way."

"I found her buttin' her damn empty skull on the chicken wire tryin' to get out."

"Why didn't you kill her then?"

"Seems she's doin' that just fine by herself," said Dougal. He hung his cap and hunting coat on points of an antler in the hallway and began to scrub his hands in the kitchen sink. "Well buddy, you've seen her."

"This morning you said I could have her. Can I take her now?"

"Come this time tomorrow," Dougal said, sitting with finality at the wooden table, the morning's newspaper at his elbow.

"Piece of hot pie, Mister?" said the kind lady. She held out the finished product. "Custard."

"No thank you Mrs. Dougal. I really should..."

"Not Mrs.," spat Dougal, "Charlotte Dougal, my sister."

Charlotte bowed slightly.

Edging and nodding, Warren backed towards the screen door and sidled coolly by crippled Cerberus into the dusk.

Many hours passed before he ceased thumping one wicked bastinado after another on the flayed tumid soles of incestuous Dougal's feet and regained the composure requisite to reading of his goshawk. Twice he walked downstairs to use the bathroom and twice he was rebuffed by Gretel's prolonged occupancy. Persistent pressure this second time led him behind the house where his strained mind heard phantom footsteps running through the grass; faraway, a farm dog barked, stopped, and barked again at the echo of its bark.

Through the night Warren drowsily compiled the list of equipment he would have to purchase the next day in Starks:

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binoculars
gun
fishing rod
swivel
clothesline
soft leather strips
bells

He scribbled diagrams detailing the conversion of the shed into a draught-free hawkhouse, complete with screen porch and vertically doweled windows. A yawn squeezed tears into the corners of his eyes. The torpor settling over his body seemed to extend to the tip of his pencil. Warren's head swayed. Frizzles of iridescence floated across his drooping lids, his neck hinged his chin flush to his sternum.

His obstinate head jerked erect and Warren was awake, startled by the attic window. Like a Peeping Tom, like his mother's perspicacious eye, a full pocked moon hung centered by the cruciform sash. Warren shuffled to the window. Moonlight blanched a hoarfrost, a spring snowfall over the landscape. He uncoiled the shade.

He was administered immediate and potent sedation by Frederick Landseer's treatise, *The Complete Falconer*. Across the yawn of centuries Landseer wiggled his soporific finger and opined:

> Launch not beyond your depth, unfledged Falconer. The education of a raptore neccesitates a labour and a love. I stress, select a bird commensurate with your Learning, your Locale, the Leisure available to you, and not least, your own Fitness. Verbum Sap.

Warren's head rocked above the bulky salubrious volume in his lap. He felt the pricking of sleep benumb his thighs.

> To have superior birds, birds that will win honour and pre-eminence in the chase, the Falconer must realize the essentials of an ancient and noble art.
>
> What qualities must needs the aspiring Falconer possess?

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He should be of average size. If too tall he will be quickly spent and want dexterity. If too short he will be sudden in his motions.

He ought to be moderately well-fleshed: emaciation is a liability as he will be unable to withstand cold and prolonged toil; neither should he be corpulent for he then will be short of breath and plagued by the sun.

He must be sagacious, with a retentive memory, acute hearing, and keen eyesight.

He must have daring and tenacity to bear the rigours of climbing hill and cliff-side, swimming unfordable waters, pressing through thorny bracken.

He must know how to write the language and keep a diary of his progress.

He must possess a stentorian voice to call over the winds.

He must not sleep heavily for he must check his bird several times nightly and rouse at the slightest irregularity of jingling bells.

Training, correcting, consulting his bird shall be his main pleasure. A Falcon under the management of such a Man will exhibit the greatest mettle and address in chasing prey and do honour to the skill...

Warren's head was careened on his right shoulder, *The Complete Falconer* asprawl at his feet when Gretel snapped up the shade to the overcast morning. Her hair was drawn back with a blue headband. The sun had burned the bridge of her nose fire pink. On the metal tray she held was a glass of orange juice and a cup of coffee. Warren contracted his face into a wince.

"Why didn't you come down? Are you mad at me?"

"I have a stiff neck," he said, looking from the gray room into the gray layers of sky. "What a miserable day."

Gretel placed the tray on the floor. "How are you coming with Dougal?"

"He's a butcher."

"He was awfully nice about the garden. He wouldn't take a penny." She walked to the head of the stairs. "Oh, I'm going

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to hire Anthony to help me plant and weed the garden, things the way they are," she smiled quickly.

"How can you bear those eyes of his, my god, a basilisk..."

"Ssssh," sounded Gretel. She pointed down the stairwell.

"I'm going into Starks this morning. Make a list if you want anything." Warren stood and stretched.

"Is that all, basilisks and butchers?" she whispered and skipped down the stairs. Warren fumbled for something apt but already her dark head had disappeared through the floor.

At the kitchen table while Gretel listed various seed packets, bulk seed, plant sets and tools, Warren asked Anthony what grade he was in. Anthony took a swallow of milk, aimed his ravaging nonplus at Warren and erased his fuzzy chalk-colored moustache with a curling swipe of his tongue. "Seventh."

"You're about to enter the eighth?"

"Seventh," said Anthony. He took another swallow of milk.

"Milk and eggs," rescued Gretel and she penciled them beneath "six tomato plants."

The sun burned behind a dense cloud covering, flecking the ash sky with blue, silver and red. Warren drove into the malodorous Village of Starks crossing the concrete bridge over the Starks River. Under the ledge of sky the river appeared motionless, like livid sheets of rock. Starks was ruled by the wee triumvirate: toothpicks, popsicle sticks and tongue depressors. Suitably, three monolithic stacks were each diademed with columns of royal blue smoke.

At Jink's Hardware an old man with a crew-cut of white spikes sold Warren a cheap green plastic fishing rod and reel, a .22 rifle and ammunition, field glasses, a swivel, a clothesline, packets of seed, tomato and onion sets, a hoe and a rake.

"Varmints botherin'?" he asked Warren who could make neither head nor tail of his intention. "Chucks? Coons?" he yelled as Warren barged out the door.

A permanently smiling matron who spoke no English sold him some supple maroon leather and saddle soap at Mike's

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Shoe Repair. On the counter a pair of off-white baby shoes had alumimum bells through their laces. Warren pointed to the bells and asked if he could purchase them, if perhaps she had another she might sell. From behind the counter the woman produced a pair of bell-less chocolate-colored boy's shoes. Warren wagged his head from side to side and shook the bells on the off-white infant's shoes. The jovial woman studied a tag on the shoes and said, "Mart-in, Mar-tin."

Warren entered the Five and Ten Cent Store. They stocked cowbells, catbells, deskbells, and bells for the bedside of the invalid. "The kind on a baby's laces," Warren explained to the neckless teen behind the glass candy counter.

Warren was on his way out when he spied amidst a heap of orange dolls, astronauts, and black bears a tiny rubber man with a green silk shirt and a ruby coxcomb. Threaded to the peak of the coxcomb were three round aluminum bells and the reasonable price: seventy-nine cents.

In the yellow circle of Dougal's flashlight beam the vapid lackluster hawk hunched in the root-cellar corner. The lined wooden crate Warren had constructed to transport his gos-hawk was hardly necessary. Her round bulging eyes had sunken and become oval. A discharge issued from her nostrils and her wings shuddered.

"Instead of friggin' with this bird I'd help out my wife with that garden if I was you," said Dougal.

"You're not though," said Warren.

"Suit yourself, buddy." Dougal cut the nylon cord around the bird's leg with his pocket knife. Her claws were blue and still fierce-looking. Warren, pinioning both her wings, set the hawk into the crate. She did not struggle.

Warren inspected the hawk closely when he had returned to his shed. Her feathers showed hunger traces and were soiled a pasty white around the vent. Her right leg was swollen and discolored where the nylon had eaten into it.

Warren took the attic stairs three steps to a bound. He rummaged through his books for some antidote but they were

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either incomprehensible or archaic. Landseer's fleshless features coruscated over his crucible as he intoned:

> Take a piece of gumdragon; the oil of earthworms and roe, with eels cut in pieces and dipped in warm sheep's blood: mix with incense and mummy...

Warren clapped the book shut and downstairs, rifled through the medicine cabinet. He decided to paint eucalyptus oil on his hawk's nares with the cotton nub of an ear-cleaner and lacquer iodine on her misshapen leg.

Gretel was alone eating at the table when he rushed in for food. He brought the hawk two strips of raw steak on a dish and set it by her side. "Here Gos," coaxed Warren dangling the meat before her beak. She looked askance. Warren plopped the meat back on the dish and with assuring measured movements, left the room.

Gretel was rinsing her dinner plate in the sink. "Well, what's the diagnosis?"

"I don't know. She looks terrible."

"She?" said Gretel. She magnified the arch of her brows. "I'm going to see her, okay?"

"No," said Warren, "I want to see if she eats. Besides, I read that some hawks get riled in a woman's presence."

"Bullshit."

"You can read it for yourself."

Gretel put Warren's supper on the table without comment. She leaned against the stove. "We planted the squash, the carrots and the beets."

"Ah, that's what seems so odd, Madame," simpered Warren, "where is your catamite?"

"Don't always jeer," said Gretel. "This afternoon while you were in Starks I slept with Anthony. He has no navel. Would you believe it?"

The hillock of mashed potatoes. The peas in a green hump. Seared meat halfway to his mouth, Warren looked up at her bright, watchful and mischievous eyes until he had contained himself. He lowered his fork to the plate with a clink and said squeakily, "Fine sport for an expectant mother."

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Gretel was furious. "That thank God I'm not!" she shouted. Her flushed cheeks pulsing, she twirled and dashed from the room.

Warren stayed at the table. He squeezed the mashed potatoes through his fork tines into intricate crinkles around the lip of the plate. He sat at the table until his plate became unfocused. There was no other alternative: he rose and walked to the shed.

Gos was huddled over the empty meat dish. She flapped and started to hop across the plank floor. Warren waited firmly. The hawk calmed and slowly Warren approached her. From his pocket he took a soft jess and tied it around her left leg. Once more he pinioned her wings tight to her body and placed her on a perch, the bar a young poplar trunk nailed to the shed corners. He fastened the jess to a leash in turn fastened to the poplar trunk. The hawk nestled her clenched right foot into her body.

Warren sat, his back to the wall and watched his bird, roosted now atop the swivel of her leash. A faint tapping at the door roused him.

"Warren... Warren," said Gretel hoarsely. She had been crying. "Warren, I lied. I didn't sleep with Anthony."

Warren did not answer.

"I swear I didn't... I lied. I just felt sorry for him."

"How did you know that detail about his navel?" asked skeptical Warren.

"He took off his shirt in the garden. Warren, don't be silly. I lied. Christ, he's only twelve years old."

"Are you still pregnant?"

"You know I am, Warren."

"Do I?"

"You should."

Warren tiptoed past the diffident eyes of the hawk to the door. He opened it a crack to Gretel's red-puffed face. "Come to bed now, Warren."

"Why did you say those things to begin with?"

Gretel shrugged benignly and sniffled.

"Well?"

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"I don't know."

"I have to stay with the hawk," said Warren.

"All night?"

"She's sick and frightened."

"So am I."

Warren opened the door wide, craned out his head and kissed Gretel lightly on her forehead. Gretel smiled at him. Her lips contorted thinly and she said, "Night, you condescending prick." Warren recoiled his head barely in time to avoid being boxed in the slamming door.

He smarted under a welter of vexation and relief at the narrowness of his escape. She had utterly misread him. That much was clear. It was a kiss of tenderness, of compassion, mused Warren, his nose inches from the pine door. It was a kiss of forgiveness.

The hawk raised her rounded tailshaft and sliced a loose splat of grayness into the corner. Warren rolled his shoulders and sighed. At the least he could accustom his hawk to his presence, the odor of his flesh and sparse brownish hair, his green billiard-cloth shirt and mutilated green flannel trousers.

In order to tame her Warren intended to keep watch and prevent the bird from sleeping. Simultaneously the hawk observed the man. Under eerie white brows, her orange eyes never left him. Her black pupils swiftly contracted and expanded as if some arcane code were being transmitted.

The vigil of the hawk continued through the night. She scrutinized the shadowy creature doubled up below her, its head on its knees, a garland of cobwebs festooned to the wall above its head.

Sunrise slanted incarnadine light through the doweled window and Warren's eyelids. He blinked and looked at the cinder-and-salmon-colored striations across the plank floor. Instantly, to establish his bearings, he replayed Gretel's ruse, the jarring door-slam, his ailing hawk. The hawk! She was not on her perch.

In the dark opposite corner of the shed the hawk floundered

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on her belly, entangled in her leash. Her eyes were fastened on Warren. He pushed himself to his feet and replaced the mute goshawk on her perch. She tilted, gained her equilibrium and clutched the poplar with both her feet. Her breastbone bulged from under her brindled ivory breast.

Warren left the hawkhouse and with resolution, strode up to the attic. He filled his trouser pockets with ammunition, looped the leather strap of his field glasses around his neck and grabbed his rifle.

He met alluringly disheveled Gretel downstairs. She wrapped her quilted yellow bathrobe close about her and froze. Warren swept gingerly past her apprehensive face, the barrel of his .22 depressed.

From the granite doorstep he scanned the fields behind his house, first with his naked eye, next through his field glasses. He unbolted his rifle and fed it one lead-and-copper cartridge. He prowled around the garden in the dewy grass. Again he raised the glasses to his eyes. Shrewdly adjusting the dial, he transformed a nebulous kaleidoscope of colored mist into the more mundane knoll of pine saplings. He focused on a flock of starlings strolling through the grass like violet-green mechanical toys. He raised the cold stock to his cheek in rehearsal. He shuddered and stealthily crossed to the ravine.

Warren had never shot a gun. He had killed a bird once, a goldfinch, in the chrome grill of his car. The wind had meshed its pale feathers into the studding and he was forced some days later to extract the rigid bird-parts piecemeal.

He paused behind the dead elm. From his lowly vantage the starlings were not visible. He crept slowly up the knollside. The unwitting colony of starlings came into view. Warren aped the prone posture he had seen the surly sniper assume on Technicolor mesa-tops. He isolated one bird and aligned its breast with the sight of the barrel. The starling dunked under a pine bough. Warren pressed the trigger gradually and gradually squinted his eyes shut. His mind heard the explosion it expected and he leapt to his feet to locate his quarry. The air filled with a flurry of fleeing black triangles. He scoured the ground beneath the sapling but found no trace of vio-

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lence. He unbolted his rifle. The cartridge popped into the air. Warren clenched his teeth: he had overlooked the safety.

From that point, birds uncannily disappeared at Warren's approach. Stalking fowl in suffocating spring growth was a tedious affair. The sun glared. His field glasses became a millstone. He unbuttoned his billiard-cloth shirt and circled back toward the road. Warren remembered he had not eaten supper the night before. He shifted his gun from hand to hand and trudged along the ridge above the roadside.

A pulp truck labored up a short incline. Warren waved to the driver. The obtuse trucker in turn beeped his horn twice and shot Warren with the improvised gun of his index finger and thumb. Chagrined, Warren plopped down under a wild apple tree. Brown wisps of petals were strewn around its trunk. He mopped his nape and brow and stretched out supine, his fingers locked behind his head.

A foolhardy twitter commenced above his head.

Oh, unlucky descendent of the fabulous Bird that capered so guilelessly upon the menacing snout of the Serpent—a sparrow lit on a branch above Warren's head. Cunningly, smoothly, he groped for his .22 and pulled it to him.

The sparrow scolded.

Warren fired.

The bird dropped by Warren's ear and scooted unevenly into thick grass. Warren crawled in pursuit. He parted the grass and clubbed the wounded sparrow to death with the stock of his gun. He inserted the hot limp-necked bird into his shirt pocket. Swallowing his quickening secretion of saliva he traipsed down the embankment to the road, the rifle resting in the crook of his arm.

The bird seemed grotesquely small.

Warren estimated his expedition had covered four to six miles. He trekked along the pebbled shoulder of the road, then, to gain better prospect of his location, tugged a jutting root and hoisted himself up the incline. Less than one hundred and fifty yards away sat his clapboard farmhouse. Through his binoculars Warren discerned Gretel squat on her haunches shaping mounds of earth around the corn kernels that sprin-

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kled from shirtless Anthony's palm. A long pink scar smiled from his tanned flesh above the waist of his dungarees.

To frighten them, Warren approached silently, his rifle raised. Gretel spotted him first. She screamed warning. *Crouched low, Anthony bolted through the shaking grass to* the ravine.

Warren walked up to the garden shaking his head in amazement. "And what was that all about?" You didn't actually think..." he grinned.

"I have no idea what's in your head so..."

"So you sounded alarm." Warren laughed gleefully and plucked the battered prey by the tail feathers from his pocket. "This hunter is after bigger game." Mockingly he jiggled the sparrow before her face.

"Is this your idea of a game?" Gretel said scornfully.

"Certainly," said Warren. "You see to your Kestrel, me to my Gos."

His hawk was sitting alertly where he had left her. Warren slipped on his doeskin gauntlet and shook the sparrow a step below the perch. The hawk examined the tiny meal and bobbed reluctantly; then she pounced down on his fist, lowered her head and began to tear.

IV

First page center of a garnet-colored vinyl notebook Warren block-printed HAWKING DIARY on a sky-blue line. The twenty-third of June he penned his initial turgid entry:

> I have nursed Gos diligently. I have roved hilltops, foraged the ravines, tramped thicket and field to provide her three small daily meals.
>
> To date, her diet consists chiefly of sparrow, chickadee, and starling. She convalesces rapidly. Pleasant mornings I weather her for an hour in the yard on a metal perch.
>
> Still, small reminders of her truculent captivity persist: a

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black scab on the top of her head and a brown ring around her right arm, much like a burn.

When I enter the hawkhouse, she flaps excitedly. There is more to manning a hawk than the calculated equipoise of food and the lack of it!

June 24—

Despite the steamy day I wore my customary outfit so as not to unsettle Gos. At noon I shot the raven in the elm. This was overdue. For too long it had harassed me with its Halloween poses. The gardeners I think were taken aback at my marksmanship. Good. I put them on edge.

I fed Gos half a cropful of the raven's greasy breast meat. She is slicing with increasing vigor.

Late this afternoon I promenaded her around the fields for a full hour or more. She adjusted to the rhythm of my gait at once. She was enjoying this stroll when a road-grader scraped by. She became flustered, so promptly I returned her home. I was unprepared for the pinpricking sensation a glance at the ground elicited: my shadow stretched in the grass before me, the cruel profile of Gos on my fist.

Later this evening I will dismember a wing of the raven and attach its nub to the clothesline for a lure. It occurs to me as the days pass that this household has become severely polarized into two ancient camps: Farmers and Hunters.

June 26—

Gos jumped the entire length of her leash for the head of the chickadee garnishing my glove-thumb.

Constant arduous work is toughening my body. I begin to comprehend why the true hunter has long observed rules of abstinence. Without a Spartan continence is this rate of advancement, this one-mindedness possible?

June 29—

I jessed Gos' right leg yesterday. This morning I fastened a bell above each of her jesses. The bells seemed to annoy her. She pecked at them and ate little.

Once daily I feed her a moderately full crop. A hard

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rain cooled the air this morning but the afternoon was muggy. I kept her inside.

I extended the length of her leash and she will readily (at the trill of the police whistle or the call of her name) leap the distance across the hawkhouse to my fist. Sometimes I reward her with a strand of meat. The hand of my gauntlet is crusted with gore.

Under my attic window now the ping/ping of the shuttlecock is most distracting. Gretel is teaching the basilisk the game of badminton. This is another exhibition on her part—she will do anything to convince me she is happy. I know better. She contrives an ebullient girlishness. She wears beige shorts.

Still, I am insufficiently neutralized.

July 5—

Today a clouded milestone! Tonight an auspicious crescent moon; yet it is painful to write.

I tied a fifty-foot length of clothesline to the leash and launched her to the lowest branch of the elm. She hunched there and gazed about. Like a scarecrow, I extended my gloved arm, called her name and blew my whistle. She darted obediently to my outstretched arm. The single unpleasant aspect of this episode was that she miscalculated upon landing and punctured my unsheathed upper arm.

I put Gos back in the hawkhouse and rewarded her with a tidbit. Gretel interrupted her bucket-brigade to the garden to attend my lacerations. My green shirt, emblazoned with eight black rents forms an admirable ensemble now with my trousers.

Slyly, to taunt me, the pinging recommences beneath my window. I will repeat Landseer's dictum—Training, correcting, consulting his bird shall be his *main* pleasure—until it becomes one of the cells in my brain.

Damn them. If one of them overshoots, if that shuttlecock is stroked through this window, so help me I will fall upon it like a tiger on a canary and destroy it utterly.

July 11—

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For the fifth day running the weather is unbearably hot. I cannot raise my right arm above my head. Today, after swinging left-handed the meat-jeweled raven's wing lariat-style above my head I let it drop in the grass. Leashed Gos swooped low from the branch and fell at mark on the wing.

Now she has been tested and proven to whistle, to lure, to voice.

A robin I shot from the telephone wire was greedily and beautifully devoured. Gos pecked away the skullcap of this robin, dipped her horned curve into its brainstuff leaving a red wick of spinal column; this she tugged with such ferocity the headless robin turned inside-out, bursting into a crimson tulip.

Afterwards she stropped her beak merrily on my thumb. The test is not far off now.

July 13—

This kind of commitment, of discipline, is doing its work. I am hardly tempted now when I spy them from the window. Gretel and protégé resemble lotus-eaters, inhabitants of Cockaigne. They pull weeds, they water their minuscule plot; then, pretending the harvest is over they wallow in the grass and bask—legs wedged open, codpiece awry, slumbrous, besotted. The roast pig will never present to them the knife to slice its own succulent flesh as in that drugged land of Cockaigne.

They are pretenders! They are miserable.

July 17—

In the ravine I shot a rabbit that was paralyzed on a stump, sure I would pass by. Later I tied fishing line to its hind leg and Gretel (hidden behind a clump of briars) reeled it across the field. This failed. Either Gos did not see the rabbit dragged through the tall grass or else she balked at Gretel's presence.

Whichever, I know Gos is in trim; that she is properly trained, manned and prepared for the great test—free flight.

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If the day is clear, tomorrow.

On my way back to the house the young crocodile (hot to capitalize on my disabled member) challenged me to a game of badminton. I ignored him. I ignore them both. Had Gretel not tried to compete with me she might have been happy. As it is, her artificial happiness sickens me. At heart she is miserable. It is too late. I am beyond pity. When winter comes, when Gos brings home grouse and woodcock—then the grasshoppers will come knocking and obsequiously kneel.

And I shall say GO DANCE.

V

Halcyon afternoon. Warren weathered his hawk in the shade of the house. Under the baking sun Gretel sprayed the garden (leafy and pointed sheets already sprouting between stakes) with extensions of newly-purchased hose. Athwart the glacial boulder, Anthony catnapped on his stomach, his cheek resting on the backs of his hands.

At two o'clock Warren returned Gos to the inside perch. To insure a reciprocal keenness, neither austringer nor hawk had yet eaten. Warren's cumbersome right arm was swollen from shoulder to wrist. Dully, leadenly, it hung by his side as he rechecked his apparatus. He employed Gretel's cast-off leather pocketbook for his hawking pouch; into it he had stuffed the compactly wound raven-lure, an extra set of jesses, and his official police whistle—brilliant metal encasing a hardwood ball.

Gos shifted and began to rearrange plummage on her back. With his curled index finger Warren stroked her rolling dark-capped head. "Cobra," smiled Warren, "cobra de capello." Her flashing orange irides sent waves of nervous anticipation over him.

He slung his field glasses over his neck and carried his rifle into the bright field. The garden was abandoned. A rake

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lay in an aisle teeth up. Warren unbuttoned his billiard-cloth shirt and tied it around his waist. He crossed the field, rested against the leafless elm and listened: the static of mosquitoes.

He scaled the hill of saplings and collapsed grunting in a heap. A cold unnatural drop of sweat hung from his nose-tip; droplets glided down his sides to the beltline of his tattered flannel trousers. He cowled his head from the sun with his shirt and lurched downhill to a dense fir stand. A chipmunk chided him curtly and vanished into the thick-laced underbranches of a fir. Warren strayed through the stand. A branch swatted his nose and he tumbled down a steep embankment to the river.

The water was badly polluted. A yellowish head of foam had collected before a half-submerged decaying trunk. Warren dunked his head and slapped water on his neck and chest. His eyes burned. A jay rowdily flitted overhead before he could raise his weapon.

He walked along the bank noiselessly. Cedar and poplar lined the banks and shaded Warren as he made his way to a sharp bend in the river. He sat on a warm stone outside the elbow of the meander and scanned downstream through his binoculars. Trunks dammed the river below, forming a moss-rimmed pool under a birch tree. Warren let his glasses fall to his chest and twisted his knuckles in his stinging sockets. A crackling, a splash, and through the haze, red-eyed Warren beheld a spectral dryad wading in the pool. He was hallucinating he thought, his arm had gone septic. She floated on her back as white light glinted through the birch leaves, dappling her breasts, naked belly and loins. A faunlet rudely appeared and gamboled on the mossy bank.

Warren's field glasses dispersed the sylvan sham, focusing lucidly and cruelly on Anthony's navel slash; depressing to his furless, contracted and uncircumcised spout. Anthony cannonballed into the pool with a great splash and Gretel frolicked to the bank. Water beaded her body. She laughed giddily as Anthony stood on his hands in the pool and wiggled his toes.

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Crablike the intruder backed into the brush. When he was thirty feet from the water he rose and scrambled feverishly up the incline. He crumpled on the burnt umber floor of the firs. "Slut," he muttered, "pathetic slut."

The sun was lowering when Warren's .22 yapped like a cap gun and a red-headed woodpecker dropped to the foot of the maple riddled with gimlet holes. In the hawkhouse he secured the woodpecker's breast to the raven-wing lure. He slid the strap of the hawking pouch over his shoulder. Then, awkwardly, he fitted the gauntlet upside down on his left hand. He unhooked the leash and wound the jesses about his fingers. Hungry, sharp-set, Gos straddled his ungainly glove and clenched.

Outside she revolved her head, puzzling at the distant moan of a farm dog. Warren halted at the far end of the field one hundred feet short of the elm. With a thrust of his arm he cast Gos off. She beat her wings swiftly (he heard the whoosh of her fingers pressing down the air) and sailed to the lowest dead limb. There she hunched. Her head cocked from side to side.

Warren fidgeted, his eyes fixed on the hawk, as long as he was able. He extended his good arm and gave a blast of his police whistle. The hawk flapped her wings and pruned them close. Her bells jingled lightly. She settled on the limb. Warren followed with two shrill blasts. Gos did not move. Warren sat in the grass and waited. Patience. He counted to three thousand. Presently he took the raven lure from his pouch and swung it around his head shouting GosGosGos with each revolution. The weighted lure dropped in the grass. Gos sulked gibbous-backed on the limb. In the lavender twilight her silhouette resembled a turkey vulture. Warren blew brief strident blasts on the whistle until he felt dizzy.

He tramped to the foot of the elm and called up to her. He drummed his palm on the rotting trunk. With a tinkling and a rustle of wings the shadow of the hawk left the elm and skimmed over the knoll toward the firs, her jesses trailing behind.

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Warren snatched the lure and stumbled up the pine knoll. He sickened at the appearance of the enormous saffron balloon bouncing on the horizon. He imagined a snapping sound, the fist of a child gripping a limp balloon string—the balloon perceptibly rose, diminished, and diluted to an ocher moon. Warren bleated his whistle with all his breath. He whipped the lure over his head. He called the name of his hawk at the top of his voice. Impulsively he discarded the lure and moon-eyed drifted into the firs, his ears pricked to catch the tinkling of bells above the hissing trees.

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Savages

A Motion Picture Outline

James Ivory
Michael O'Donoghue
George Swift Trow

1. *Dawn in a forest.* Pale light in the sky. Woods indistinct. Rustling of leaves, sound of soft, wooden whistles. On a sort of bluff or ledge of stone elevated above the rest there is seen a cloud of smoke drifting up into the sky or trees. The camera reveals the source of smoke—a small fire, banked with damp leaves. It holds on this. Suddenly more leaves are scattered on the fire from beyond the range of the camera, and then several pairs of naked feet are seen. They are caked and painted with a mixture of mud and ash. The feet do a little shuffling step at the edge of the fire—up and down, up and down. The camera pulls back and we see there are more than a dozen men and women, daubed all over with the mud and ash. They wear masks. They lean over the fire inhaling the smoke, which has a narcotic effect. These "mud people" communicate with each other by means of little wooden whistles. They make a soft, tooting kind of tone.

2. *Slightly later.* The mudmen move along a trail in the forest. They lead one of their members towards a clearing. His wrists are tied with vines and his mask has markings on it to set him apart. The mudmen signal with their whistles and

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answering whistles from the woods indicate someone is coming to meet them. The mudmen become excited and all start whistling as three or four more come out of the brush. The most important of these is a woman—the Priestess—her mask is painted with designs. She seems to be in command and is deferred to by the others; yet when she comes up to them, a curious thing happens: she turns her back and leans over in a waiting, expectant position. The mudman whose wrists have been tied is led over to the woman. He seizes her and the others in the group close in around them. They have been blowing their whistles up to this point. Now they stop. They continue their shuffling dance step in silence.

3. *Later still.* The mudman whose wrists have been tied stands alone in the clearing, waiting. The others approach him and remove his mask, but the face underneath is as smeared with ash as the rest of his body. He lies down on the ground, resting his head on a flat stone. He does this as automatically as when he went up to the Priestess in the previous scene to seize her. It is clear that this man—The "Consort"—is about to be sacrificed, as the others gather around him in a threatening circle. Picking up an enormous rock or tree trunk, they hold it over his head, waiting for a signal from the Priestess to drop it. She stands apart from and above the rest of the tribe, emphasizing her power. She looks toward the east, waiting for the sun. The sky is very red and the edge of the sun appears on the horizon. But before she can give her signal, a croquet ball, bright red and "special," rolls into the clearing, through the circle, and strikes the sacrificial stone with a sharp click, the click of two croquet balls. The ritual is interrupted. Frantic whistling ... perhaps piercing staccato bursts. Everyone but the Priestess runs into the woods; she, however, comes forward to claim the croquet ball. After she examines it, she gives one long whistle which is different from any we've heard and the mudmen reappear. An Old Man shows the Priestess from which direction the ball came. She confers with the Leader and they set off in that direction. Others follow, some slowly, some reluctantly.... Their order indicates tribal status: Leader first, followed by the Violent Man. The rest of the men sur-

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round and protect the Priestess. The Eternal Slut is the last to leave. The Poet-Consort is left standing alone in the clearing ... the whistles get more and more faint.

4. *Forest Trail.* As the tribe proceeds through the forest, there is foraging for edibles—bugs, berries, etc. A disturbance in the underbrush alerts the mudmen. They spot some creature moving away from them and they go after it. The creature is a brown-skinned, lithe girl whom they stalk and capture after a short chase. Terrified of the mudmen, she fights back, but finally is subdued. She wears a string of bright blue beads around her waist. The mudmen return to the trail and their search for the source of the croquet ball. The Man-Woman is fascinated by the Forest Girl's blue beads. He makes her give them to him and he puts them around his neck. He gives her a branch to cover her nakedness. The tribe moves on and down into the little valley which is very dense with growth. Someone finds a croquet mallet leaning against a tree and brings it to the Priestess. After going further, they reach a grassy area where someone trips over a croquet wicket. Curious, they investigate and come upon overgrown statuary, a rotting arbor, etc. There is an almost-empty wine glass in this arbor. Flies crawl on it.

5. *The Swimming Pool.* They discover an empty swimming pool and kneeling, lap the puddle of brackish water at the bottom. Some remove their masks and leave them by the pool. Faint "Jazz Baby" music played backwards. There is a skeleton in dinner clothes lying in the pool, obscured by leaves and overgrowth. The Limping Man is drawn to it, stares for a moment, then passes on.

6. *The Motor Car.* The tribe comes upon a vintage motor car. A shoe or article of ancient lingerie is in the back seat. While investigating, someone accidentally bumps the horn. The sound is feeble, the sound of a car that has not been used for years. The mudmen vanish into the foliage. The Leader is the first to re-emerge. With the Violent Man and the other men, he cautiously approaches the car and examines it. Perhaps he tries the horn. The tribe then gathers flowers and

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strews them on the car, hoping to placate whatever spirit inhabits it.

7. *The House.* During the above, the Child enters the house, walking past the camera, which is inside. The mudmen go in search of her, and the camera pulls back, revealing walls, furniture, and vistas of other rooms, all uninhabited. This is the first time the viewer knows there is a house. In the background, the tribe notes the disappearance of the Girl and crowds around the doorway, afraid to enter. Finally, the Old Couple, who watch over the Child, enter the house. It is significant that the Old Couple lead the search as they're motivated by affection, not tribal authority. After them comes the Limping Man, the Leader, the Priestess (still holding the croquet ball), the Violent Man, the Misanthropic Woman, the Man-Woman, the Unstable Girl, etc. The Eternal Slut stays outside. She blows her whistle, hoping to bring the others back.

8. *Rooms.* Confronted with civilization, the mud people investigate the house, in roughly the following order: Entrance through sunroom; through darkened paneled room past a film projector; through hallway near landing, where they hesitate; through dining room, where there are the remains of a dinner; through collection room with its paintings, cabinets, and other objects, to library. The Man-Woman, intrigued by the collections, stays behind after the others have moved on. He stares at a portrait fixedly. He licks the portrait.

9. *Birth of Religion.* The mudmen pull open some tall doors leading into the octagonal library. They fall back in fear and wonder at what they see. A life-size statue of Minerva, golden and illuminated by a shaft of sunlight, stands above them. The Priestess enters, places the croquet ball before the statue. The mudmen watch her in awe. She turns them out of the room and closes the door.

10. *The Photograph Album.* The Consort-Poet finds an old velvet-bound book of photographs but the subjects of the photographs are missing: All that is left in the photographs

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is a shoe on an ottoman or a cork-tipped cigarette smoldering in an ashtray, as if a person stepped out of the frame just before the picture was taken. He studies these pictures. The Eternal Slut knocks on the glass to get his attention, but doesn't succeed.

11. *The Huddle.* Despite minor frictions (fighting over shiny objects—i.e., doorknobs, with the Priestess acting as arbiter) the mud people huddle together in the house. Some engage in communal hygiene (picking off lice from other's hair, etc.). The Poet-Consort approaches and cautiously joins the huddle. The Eternal Slut finally comes inside. She too joins the huddle. As yet, no one has ventured upstairs.

12. *The Swimming Pool.* The mud people find that the swimming pool has been inexplicably filled. They go for a swim and some of their mud is washed off in the process. The Eternal Slut, eternally on the fringes of civilized society, calls from the underbrush. At the shallow end of the pool, the Child swims while the Limping Man, who cannot swim, consciously washes his mud off. While playing in the water, one of the Young Lovers caresses the other's back, as if discovering it for the first time.

13. *The Mirror.* At last the mudmen climb the stairs to the second floor. In climbing the stairs, they encounter an enormous mirror which reflects their images, frightening them. They shout—the first human sound so far. They gather behind the Priestess who throws her croquet ball at the mirror, shattering it. The ball returns down the stairs to her in a curious, controlled fashion. The Poet-Consort picks it up. The Priestess takes it away and they go upstairs.

14. *Clothes.* The mud people, led by the Misanthropic Woman, discover clothes in the bedroom closets. They pull them out and examine them closely and some of them put the clothes on, although, in most cases, incorrectly. At first, men's and women's garments are interchangeable, but finally they are put on right; shoes, stockings, gloves, hats, underwear—these things remain mysterious and intriguing. Nor has all the

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mud been washed off: muddy arms, muddy feet, plus a few people still entirely covered with mud (the Eternal Slut). We see the individuality—the faces and expressions—of the individual mudmen, up to now hidden, emerge. Yet the mud and grime is still pronounced. The mudmen go off to other rooms, wearing or merely carrying, the clothes. The Man-Woman, who is clearly male, stays behind. He-She looks carefully at all the things which have turned up, trying some, discarding others. He ends up choosing dress appropriate for a woman.

15. *Speech.* Speech is starting, like that of sweet, bright children. With speech, also begin simple personal relationships, having to do with individuals and not with group or tribal feelings.

16. *Separate actions.* The group consciousness is beginning to break down, despite the Priestess who tries to hold it together. She continually tries to dominate by virtue of her assumption of high-priestly powers and in some instances is successful, but her influence wanes as individual prerogatives increase. The mudmen begin assuming not only personalities but identities as to function within the house.

17. *The Croquet Game.* The Misanthropic Woman, the Violent Man, the Limping Man, and the Unstable Girl begin playing a light-hearted game of croquet. (These four are usually in advance of the others...) The rest join them and they have a sweet, joyous garden party. Asha serves lemonade, as instructed by the Priestess, whom we see is now become a society matron. All are dressed properly. Toward twilight, a dead whippet is found on the pavement. While the four continue to play croquet, the others gather around it in a circle, somewhat automatically, as if for some ritual that they've forgotten. As the Priestess-Society Matron steps forward, uncertain, hesitant, but knowing that something is necessary, all the lights in the house go on behind them. The sun has set. They drift across the lawn and up the paths. They make polite small talk.

18. *Dinner.* A fine dinner has been laid with two caviar-filled swans carved out of ice. As the mud people file in, one

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notes that they're perfectly dressed for dinner, the men in tuxedos, the women in long dresses and jewels. The mood is Victorian. The conversation is elegant and witty. Everyone has a name now, yet no one has changed. The Eternal Slut is overdressed and still appealing to be liked; the Leader talks of boring banker's topics like embargoes and interest on municipal bonds; the Poet alternates between becoming silences and bursts of talk; the Unstable Girl is charmingly unstable, making remarks the meaning of which are not entirely clear; the Violent Man, within the decorum of the dinner party as set by the Priestess, contradicts his table partners; the Misanthropic Woman backbites and tries flirtation; the Limping Man says wise things, to which the Poet and the Unstable Girl pay close attention; the Old Couple reminisce; the Man-Woman firmly leads the conversation to uplifting and educational topics. Presiding over all this is the Priestess-Hostess. She has separated the Young Lovers, so that the young man sits between the Misanthropic Lady and the Unstable Girl, and his beloved is put next to the Violent Man and the Poet. They grow used to this separation. The Forest Girl has no place at the table. She has become a ladies' maid. The Man-Woman speaks of primitive tribes and savage fertility rites as one who has read an ever-so-interesting article in the *National Geographic*. What particularly interests her, she says, is the odd custom of murdering the Consort of the tribal Priestess. The others agree that this is indeed a strange custom. In the midst of dinner, all stop talking as if caught in a prolonged and mysterious silence which they cannot break... we hear the sound of rustling trees. Unnoticed, the croquet ball rolls across the floor, through the room, down the stairs, and heads toward the croquet court. When it has gone, conversation continues.

19. *The Sinking of the LUSITANIA.* The women withdraw to the French Room, leaving the men alone to talk, over brandy, about hints of the coming warfare. The men join the ladies, but before they can socialize, the radio comes on. All freeze. The announcer is describing the sinking of an ocean liner (actually the LUSITANIA, but never mentioned). When he tells how, from his vantage point, he can see the ship struck by

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a torpedo, the chandelier sounds a tinkling tremor, although no motion is discernible. When he tells how the lifeboats are lowered, how some capsize and how men leap from the decks of the listing ship, no one moves. Everyone's attention is riveted. Finally, he says, "And now, I can see this great old queen of the sea, with all her lights ablaze, commencing to sink beneath the waves..." (The voice fades in and out, broken by static.) From a great distance we see the house, with all its lights ablaze. No motion. Just the voice fading in and out, describing the ship as it goes under. When the ship has sunk, the radio goes dead. Silence. The Old Man goes to the piano and plays and sings "Follow the Gleam." Others join in as an act of courage until they're all singing. After a few choruses, they hum, underscoring terse dialogue.

20. *Low key scene.* Young Lovers carrying on a mild flirtation with other partners.

21. *Gaiety.* The Misanthropic Woman, waving an ostrich feather fan, puts on some kind of Cole Porter "Steppin' On the Spaniel" type phonograph music. At this point, the mood turns gayer. Action becomes fragmented. Two people play parchesi. Some dance. The pace quickens. Champagne is splashed about. A silent movie projector shows a film of what seems to be a black musical or revue of the late 20's, intercut with shots of a magician opening a large box. However, just when something is to be revealed, the film breaks down. When it is rethreaded, the film starts in at an earlier point, builds up to the same climax, and breaks down again. The mudmen, in their evening clothes, are intrigued by the film.

22. *Poolside.* At the pool, where strings of colored lights and lanterns have been hung up, the party has reached F. Scott Fitzgerald atmosphere: squirting champagne, wild dancing, uncontrollable laughter, etc. In the madness, the Limping Man is knocked or shoved into the pool. As he drowns, the poolside party goes on. No one notices him. Or, the others pretend not to notice him... he sinks slowly, making no sound.

23. *Charades.* Charades are suggested. The dancing stops

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and all leave for the house where they are still trying to get the film in the projector past the "revelation," but, like a recurring dream, that point is never reached. Only the Child is left by the pool. The charades show what has become of the mudmen's relationships. For example, the Priestess and the Poet-Consort feel they have some special attraction for each other: What is it? Everyone's speech as they try to guess the subject of the charades becomes very mannered: style is replacing feelings.

24. *The Game.* Dialogue turns very odd. Someone cuts his bare foot on mirror fragments at the top of the stairs. A strange game is played in which one person is "it" and the others shout out numbers: "43" (a man crawls about the floor on all fours, licking the air); "15" (Asha, readmitted to the company, lies over a chair); someone kneels in a curious position on a table when a number is called, but gets down when the caller says, "I said '77' not '67'!" In the dining room, the swans have melted into shapeless and indecipherable forms.

25. *The Japanese Room.* Re-emergence of the Narcotic Leaf: Some go to the Japanese Room where they take the narcotic leaf. The Child assists in the preparation. Many involved in this have changed into occult robes. Buddhist chant... Oriental rites. Asha, still in her maid's outfit, is the leader of these activities.

26. *Decay.* Everything is coming apart fast. Even the Old Couple have betrayed each other. Freaky sex. Clothing begins to disappear. The Misanthropic Woman starts speaking French. She and some of the others have painted their faces white... They roam about the place. No one notices that the film in the projector has gone past the breakdown point at last, and the "mystery" is revealed, if they would only care to watch.

27. *The Motor Car.* The interior is lit. The Forest Girl and the Misanthropic Woman sit in the back seat with arms around each other. They discuss removal of body hair (diathermy, etc.) They turn the headlights on revealing the Unstable Girl hanging...

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28. *Croquet.* The sky is getting light. The Misanthropic Woman stops speaking French. The lights in the house flicker and go out. The projector stops. The phonograph stops. The Poet-Consort picks up a record and looks at it curiously. He holds it next to his ear. Nothing. The Violent Man snatches it away and holds it next to *his* ear. Still nothing. He smashes the record. Then he smashes all the records in sight. From inside one can see the ocean outside the windows. The mud people are drawn to the lawn... some in dinner clothes, some in lingerie. They begin to play croquet. It rains slightly and they catch raindrops on their tongues. The lawn is wet. Many remove their shoes. The Leader eats a bug from a bush. The Man-Woman has a 5 o'clock shadow by now and is abandoning her clothes, turning back into a man. Perhaps she wears only a skirt, looking like a Polynesian warrior. Names are forgotten. Sentences begin but don't end: "I read the most interesting...uh...uh...aaah..." The Priestess-Hostess, idly trailing her hand in a flower bed at one point, gets some mud on her fingers and unthinkingly spreads it over the back of her hand... "it feels so nice and cool," she tells the others. The Eternal Slut flirts with the man of the Young Lovers and tries to lure him into the woods. She sends his croquet ball into the woods and then hits her own after it. They disappear into the leaves. Others send the balls of their opponents into the woods and are sent themselves. The Violent Man and the Priestess have a last glass of wine in the arbor and then enter the forest. Only the Poet-Consort is left. He is playing the red "special" ball. He still wears dinner dress, though his bare feet are muddy.

29. *Shots throughout the house.* Pulling away... room by darkened room. The dawn light comes in through the windows... pulling away. A shot of the swimming pool where the Limping Man lies at the bottom covered with leaves, the water having mysteriously drained out. Whistles are calling to the Poet-Consort. Rustling tree sounds. He hesitates, looks about. He is all alone on the lawn. The abandoned house looms behind him. Very consciously, making a choice apparently, he hits his own ball exactly as the sun rises. It flies into the woods and he follows it. The sun comes up.

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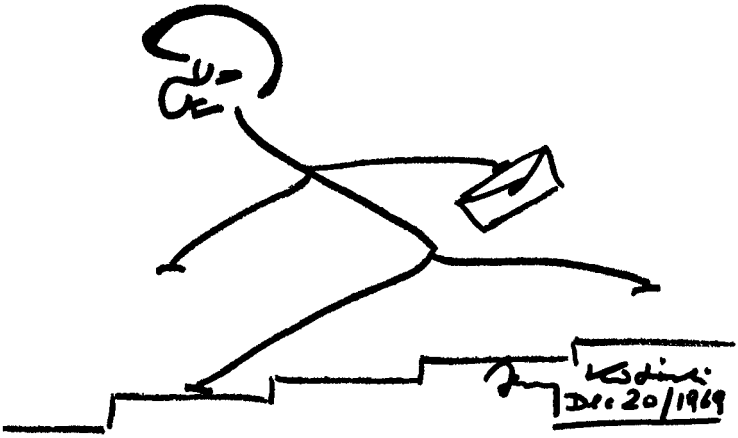
The Art of Fiction XLVI

Jerzy Kosinski



Jerzy Kosinski, born in Poland in 1933, does not like to talk about his past, although the events of his life correspond almost exactly to those described in his novels. While still a young boy, he was separated from his parents and wandered from village to village in war-torn Eastern Europe. His life in postwar Poland was collective, structured and ordered—the very antithesis of the traumatic experience of his youth. From 1955 to 1957 he was an Associate Professor at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. In 1957, he left Poland and arrived in the United States as a "private individual" with no knowledge of English and no established means of support. "I did not like myself in Poland," he says, explaining that it was the country of a past from which he was trying to separate himself. Why did he choose

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the United States? "Argentina and Brazil would not let me in. And so, I started at the other end of the alphabet."

In 1962 he married Mary Hayward Weir, "a wealthy, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant who grounded me very definitely in purely American experience." After her tragic death in 1968, he continued teaching as a professor of English—first at Wesleyan, then Princeton, and now at Yale, where he is Resident Fellow at Davenport College.

Kosinski has had twenty-five Manhattan addresses, and travels frequently in Western Europe. He has never had children, explaining that "my orbit does not make provision for the giving of life." He will not accept the responsibility of bringing others into the world and feels that if he did, his children would be burdened with his past and the vision that developed from it. He has no desire to project himself beyond his books, over which he can exercise complete control. Children would be "yet another fragmentation, another split in the self. If that self is to be free," he adds, "I must depend on no one and no one must depend on me."

After two volumes of nonfiction under the pen name of Joseph Novak, in 1965 he published his first novel, The Painted Bird, *using his own name. It has been translated into thirty-four languages, and was awarded* Le Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger *in France. For* Steps, *published in 1968, he received the National Book Award.* Being There *was published in 1971. He has also written two collections of essays,* Notes of the Author *(1965) and* The Art of the Self *(1968).*

INTERVIEWER

If you had continued to live in Poland and written in Polish, do you think your books would have been published? And if so, would they have been popular?

KOSINSKI

It's not even a matter for speculation. I would never have written in Polish. I never saw myself as a man expressing opinions in a totalitarian State. Make no mistake about it: all my generation was perfectly aware of the dimensions of our

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existence. To be a spokesman in a field which used language would require one to be a spokesman for a particular political situation. My generation considered this a trap: we would not speak for it; nor could we speak against it. So what happened was that I slowly moved toward visual expression, and became a photographer. Of course, there were some other reasons. I was bilingual—my parents spoke Russian at home while I was studying Polish in school. But there was a touch of disdain for Polish literature, which in their opinion was inferior to Russian literature. I was split, like a child who grows up in two different families; studying in Polish at the University, but at home, really, all that mattered was 19th century Russian literature.

INTERVIEWER

Could you express in photographs, given the dimensions of the trap, anything you felt?

KOSINSKI

Within the limits of photography, I could point out certain aspects of human behavior as contrasted with collective behavior. I could show old age which knows no politics; I could show the solitude of a man lost in a large field; I could point out that there is, after all, an independent, naked, human being. This in itself was a sort of political statement. I even produced some nudes of rather attractive, non-socialist female forms. It ended on a very unpleasant political note: I was accused of being a cosmopolitan who sees the flesh, but not the social being.

INTERVIEWER

Who accused you?

KOSINSKI

The members of the Photographic Society. The same thing as the Writers Union, you know. These groups are geared to this sort of policing; that is what they're there for.

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INTERVIEWER

Can one defend oneself?

KOSINSKI

Within the limits of the totalitarian doctrine—hence there is no defense. When I was growing up in a Stalinist society my guidelines were: Am I going to survive physically? Am I going to survive as a sane being? Since I was in conflict with the society, my real plight had to remain hidden. I avoided having close friends, who would know too much about me, and could be used against me. Until I left for America I lived the life of an "inner émigré," as I called myself.

INTERVIEWER

An inner émigré?

KOSINSKI

Yes. The photographic darkroom emerged as a perfect metaphor for my life. It was the one place I could lock myself in (rather than being locked in) and legally not admit anyone else. For me it became a kind of temple. There is an episode in *Steps* in which a young philosophy student at the State University selects the lavatories as the temples. Well, think how much more of a temple a darkroom is in a police state. Inside, I would develop my own private images; instead of writing fiction I imagined myself as a fictional character. I identified very strongly with characters of both Eastern and Western literature. I saw myself as Petchorin, in Lermontov's novel, *A Hero of Our Time*, as Romashov, the hero of Kuprin's *The Duel*, as Julien Sorel, and once in a while as Rastignac, facing the society and being at war with it. I wrote my fiction emotionally; I would never commit it to paper.

INTERVIEWER

Paddy Chayefsky said recently that he felt these sort of oppressive strictures were really quite important in producing fine literature. He felt that a strait jacket was essential to a writer.

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KOSINSKI

Easily said. One could argue the opposite as well and make a point for the Byronesque kind of expression with its abandonment, its freedom to collide with others, to express outrage; for Nabokov's kind of vitality. Or we can make a point for a man who choses a visionary strait jacket which is self imposed, perhaps the best form there is. Look at Balzac, Proust, Mann, Camus, Faulkner.

For every Solzhenitsyn who manages to have his first novel published officially (*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*), there are probably hundreds of gifted writers in the Soviet Union who create emotionally in their "darkrooms," and who will never write anything on paper. Or those very desperate ones who do commit their vision to paper but hide their manuscripts somewhere under the floor.

INTERVIEWER

What was the reaction of the Polish press to your achievements in English prose—to *The Painted Bird*, *Steps*, and *Being There*?

KOSINSKI

The reaction of the Polish press in Poland towards *The Painted Bird* was pure propaganda. They reinvented the content of the novel. Their major effort was to prove that any Pole who settled abroad, writes in English and is published by various western publishers had to do it either by selling himself to the CIA, Radio Free Europe, or to the Library of Congress. According to the official Party journal, the most damaging proof of my collaboration with the White House was that the novel carried the Library of Congress number... which, of course, is automatically assigned to every book published in the U.S. There were a few things, however, which they couldn't quite cope with: *The Painted Bird* was warmly received by, among others, Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*, the Communist *L'Humanité* in France, *The Daily Worker* in London, and the progressive leftist press in the rest of Western Europe. To counteract it, the Polish bureaucrats said that

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being a Jew, I sold myself to Zionists and *had* to write an anti-Polish book to achieve "success" in the West. They stressed my anti-Polishness. *The Painted Bird*, of course, was not set in Poland, it was set "somewhere in Eastern Europe." After this, they dropped me altogether. When I got the National Book Award, there was not a single mention of *Steps*, nor later, of *Being There*, as if I ceased to exist. Anyone who leaves Poland and doesn't come back, sells out his Polishness: if he left for political reasons, that would be applauded by the Poles; they would say, "Well, we all have our relatives in America, how nice that he is there now." But if he simply leaves for personal reasons, he has turned against his very "element," *his nationality*. The Polish population didn't know *The Painted Bird*; they *assumed* that I had whitewashed the Germans, that the book glorified the SS, and they were authentically enraged. I received mail not only from Poland but from Poles in the United States, who hadn't read the book either. I received thousands of angry letters and at one point I had to register some of them with the police because they were threatening in a very specific form. But, of course, I remained a free man: I was here. Can you imagine the predicament of someone who writes in the Soviet Union, feeling that this is the best thing that he can do for his country, delivers his manuscript to the Soviet publisher, and is persecuted promptly from the next day on—his case discussed in the Writers Union because, apparently, according to the accusations, in his manuscript *he reveals himself as an anti-Soviet character*. This was the case of Pasternak. When he wrote *Dr. Zhivago* he thought that he was writing a book of great human import, showing the predicament of a man caught in the changing patterns of socialist history. Well, the Party didn't see it that way. Look at Solzhenitsyn; apparently, he feels the same way. He doesn't write anti-Soviet books. It seems that he is writing books which are Russian *and* Soviet in the ultimately positive way. Again, this has not been the view of the Writers Union.

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INTERVIEWER

Who are the people in the Writers Union in Poland?

KOSINSKI

They are journalists, novelists, literary critics, poets. They have to live, and to live they have to be published from time to time by the State. I think many of them are primarily concerned with survival in their profession. It's easy to attach labels. You have to remember, they have to function within a most threatening and unpredictable reality governed by the Party bureaucracy and the total State. Hence, many of them are extremely cautious, many tend to be dogmatic, many are just desperate and some are servile agents of the State organs. The creative man in a police state has always been trapped in a cage where he can fly as long as he does not touch the wires. The predicament is: how to spread your wings in the cage. I think the majority of them fight for their own sanity and when suddenly one of them says I don't like this cage, I want out, and does something about it, the others descend upon him because he is threatening the safety of all of them.

INTERVIEWER

Given the unusual circumstances of your life, many people think of your work—the first two novels, anyway—as nonfiction.

KOSINSKI

Well, to say that *The Painted Bird*, for example, is nonfiction, or even autobiographical, may be convenient for classification, but it's not easily justified. What we remember lacks the hard edge of fact. To help us along we create little fictions, highly subtle and individual scenarios which clarify and shape our experience. The remembered event becomes a fiction, a structure made to accommodate certain feelings. This is obvious to me. If it weren't for these structures, art would be too personal for the artist to create, much less for the audience to grasp. Even film, the most literal of all the arts, is edited.

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INTERVIEWER

You once said that *The Painted Bird* is the result of a "slow unfreezing of a mind long gripped by fear." I assume this fear refers to the horrors of World War II.

KOSINSKI

I see no essential difference between World War II and any other traumatic reality. For example, I know many people whose childhood in the United States was in its own way just as traumatic as that of millions of Central Europeans.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, but in this case a whole generation was affected by the same event. A noted American critic spoke of a "brutalization of the imagination" produced in many writers by this one catastrophe.

KOSINSKI

World War II is something which I think might have affected some American critics more than it affected some of the European writers. I don't believe that human experience, as reflected in fiction, can be graded, from less brutal (presumably North American) to extremely brutal (Russian, Central European, Chinese, Bengali, and so forth). It depends on how it affects the creative mind. Among the East Europeans I know, I think I was no more, no less affected by the war than millions of others.

INTERVIEWER

You sound like Polanski, who says that violence is horrible and traumatic only when you look at it from a particular point of view.

KOSINSKI

If you—or anyone else—had been surrounded by it for years, you'd perceive it also as human, natural—and expected. You get used to it. A needle or the sight of blood may be as terrifying to a North Dakotan as a bomb is to a Vietnamese.

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INTERVIEWER

So in your view, experience is arbitrary; X pretty much equals Y, or Z?

KOSINSKI

Pretty much.

INTERVIEWER

But the experiences that you deal with in *Steps*, for instance, are certainly not what we might call "ordinary" experiences. One episode takes place in an asylum, another in a rest home, another in a lavatory, another in the New York underworld. And you continually choose incidents that to other people, at least, seem unusual.

KOSINSKI

I don't know who those "other people" are. The asylum in itself is not a very unusual institution; many of us are well on the way to it. Take the number of mentally disturbed people in any industrial society, or the number of psychiatrists practicing in New York.

INTERVIEWER

If all our institutions and experiences have equal value, that is, if anything goes, isn't there a corresponding reduction in the immediacy or intensity of your response?

KOSINSKI

It depends, I think, primarily on your outlook. If you look upon the incidents in *The Painted Bird* and *Steps* and *Being There* as peripheral and insane and not too common, then you are bound to have a shock almost every day; but if you will see yourself as part of the larger community, if you will not keep yourself in a locked compartment marked "for sane only," then you won't be very surprised when confronted by murder, persecution, or old age. Perhaps such an attitude would make you "less sensitive"—but, conversely, that would mean that the least aware, the most provincial among us, is also the most sensitive.

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INTERVIEWER

It would seem then that no one thing would faze you more than anything else.

KOSINSKI

Well, on one level, that's true: humanity does not surprise me. I accept the reality the way I have perceived it in my life.

INTERVIEWER

Why did you chose the United States when you left Poland?

KOSINSKI

When I left Poland, I was not leaving for any specific place. I had three priorities on my list, in alphabetical order: Argentina, Brazil, and the United States, all large multiethnic societies where I could find anonymity. I remember that first I carefully began collecting Spanish and Portuguese dictionaries. Only later, English and American ones. I knew a bit of French and Latin and Esperanto in addition to Russian. I assumed it would have been easier for me to pick up Spanish or Portuguese. But I was turned down by both Argentina and Brazil. They wouldn't accept me because I had a "Marxist" background. Having studied in the Soviet Union, from their point of view I was potentially a threatening element. On December 20, 1957, I was admitted to the United States, and had to decide what to do next. I was twenty-four. I did not believe in cumulative riches, as I do not believe now, because I know that the world disintegrates from time to time and even the best furniture is destroyed. Hence my faith in "portable skills," originally photography, now writing—which leave me mobile, free to *exit—to exit* is a very important verb. When I reached the United States, I said to myself that since photography, unfortunately, requires such expensive equipment, my exit would have to be language itself, writing prose.

INTERVIEWER

How long did it take you to learn English?

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KOSINSKI

I am still learning. I think I will always be learning. My attitude towards the language is like my attitude towards a woman I love; she might leave me at any time. In other words, I shouldn't leave her alone for too long. When I travel abroad for a long period of time I get very insecure because I feel that I am forgetting English. Do remember, I was already twenty-four when I began learning English and it has to be constantly pressed deeper and deeper. Otherwise it might evaporate.

INTERVIEWER

When did Joseph Conrad leave Poland?

KOSINSKI

He left for England when he was twenty-one. He wrote his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, when he was thirty-eight, and he collaborated for a while with Ford Madox Ford. What is of interest is that he had difficulty expressing himself vocally; apparently his accent was unbearable. He probably considered speaking a nuisance—a writer is not supposed to speak, he's supposed to write. Similarly, when I wrote my first book in 1959, *The Future Is Ours, Comrade*, about a year after I arrived in America, I found that I could *write* the book, but I had great difficulty discussing its chapters with friends of mine at the University. Conversing in English, though, did not interest me. I was aiming at an expression which was articulate but abstract, a language without sound. I didn't want to meet my audience, or know it in any way; I just wanted to manipulate a part of myself.

INTERVIEWER

What are the advantages of a writer working in a language which is not his own?

KOSINSKI

English helped me sever myself from my childhood, from my adolescence. In English I don't make involuntary associa-

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tions with my childhood. I think it is childhood that is often traumatic, not this or that war.

INTERVIEWER

Could you see yourself starting all over again—new country, new language?

KOSINSKI

It's a nightmare, but I do think about it. Yes, I could. French perhaps, though I speak and read it very poorly. Whenever I am in France, I notice that in French I am a different being than I am in English. French connects me somehow with my Polishness; its culture is similar, the culture of rigidity, of bureaucracy, of fear of others, all the standard European props. But then French allows you to refer to human situations in a highly abstract way. I notice that when I'm in France my "English" vision gives way to a "French" vision which is less idiosyncratic, more Cartesian, less personal, really.

INTERVIEWER

Do you ever think about abandoning writing altogether, be it in English, French or whatever?

KOSINSKI

I do. What if I found myself again in a police state? Or, to be more exact, what if a police state found me? I find it very telling that during the fourteen years of my existence in the U.S., I have always kept a photographic darkroom in my apartment. The darkroom remains even today my device for escape from the ideologies of political terror.

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever used it?

KOSINSKI

Occasionally I develop photographs for friends of mine who don't want to use the neighborhood's photo shop. I haven't done any creative photography. But as it turns out,

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the darkroom has another use. Recently I learnt that my eyesight was in danger. I took another look at my darkroom, and I thought, "Oh my God, maybe it will become a metaphor for my American existence as well." I used the darkroom to practice dictating to a tape recorder just in case I would become blind. While dictating in darkness I noticed I developed a new kind of freedom—the tape recorder prose seems to be looser, less controlled than the typewriter prose of *Steps*, for instance, or *Being There*. Afraid that I would lose my sight any minute, I prevented myself from editing: all I wanted to do was to develop the ability to be articulate while dictating. The rest I would somehow learn later. All I wanted to do was to permit my "vision," born in a darkroom, this inner vision, to reach the tape recorder.

INTERVIEWER

Did you have it read back to you?

KOSINSKI

No, I didn't want to be stopped. I just wanted to pour it out.

INTERVIEWER

What do you do with the drafts?

KOSINSKI

I put them away in a bank vault. I am secretive. I close things. I lock them. I have fifteen different places where my things are hidden. Some of the bank vaults where I send the drafts are almost bigger than my apartment. I am always afraid that some societal force will go after me, and will try to penetrate not only my apartment—let them do it!—but my inner life, which is reflected in my writing and in my letters.

INTERVIEWER

What I meant is, do you rework the "darkroom" pages?

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KOSINSKI

I am looking at them now, but I don't want to start depressing my text too much, de-escalating it, as I always did with my previous manuscripts. I used to count words the way Western Union does; my prose was like a night letter. Every word was there for a reason, and if not, I would cross it out.

INTERVIEWER

You said once that you wrote dozens of drafts of your manuscripts. Did you want to be sure that each word had exactly the power and meaning you intended, or was it a more general stylistic thing you were looking for?

KOSINSKI

In addition to the advantages I mentioned before, there are, of course, disadvantages to writing in an adopted language. The main one for me is that I am never certain whether my English prose is sufficiently clear. Also, I rarely allow myself to use English in a truly spontaneous way and therefore, I always have a sense of trembling—but so does a compass, after all.

INTERVIEWER

So you are simply checking and rechecking your use of the language?

KOSINSKI

I wanted to make the language of my fiction as unobtrusive as possible, almost transparent, so that the reader would be drawn right away into each dramatic incident. I suppress in my prose any language which calls attention to itself. What I've just said carries no value judgment. It is the opposite, for instance, of what Nabokov does. His language is made visible... like a veil or a transparent curtain with a beautiful design. You cannot help seeing the curtain as you peek into the intimate room behind. My aim, though, is to remove the veil... altogether if possible. I think in *Steps* I came closest to what I really wanted to do with English. The vision demanded a clear

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language, a language as detached as the persona of the novel. For me a novelist is not a displayer of stylistic bonfires; he is primarily conveying a vision. Of course, whether the vision will "ignite" the reader's mind is something the writer will never know.

INTERVIEWER

But can't the relationship you wish to exist between you and the reader be established just as well with embellished language? Too many authors who really have such fun with the fireworks would have to be stricken off your list.

KOSINSKI

Certainly some writers feel that by exploding language they can bring the reader's awareness to several layers of existence at the same time. But I aim at narrower situations, not at the totality of human life, as so many Anglo-Saxon writers seem to do. Maybe from their point of view the society hasn't disintegrated. They believe that there is a totality of experience, and that a human being can encompass in his perception many layers of his existence. I simply am not of this generation. At best, I think that if I can retrieve *one* fragment of reality I am lucky—not a house at large, but just a chair, a sofa, at most one small room, that's all. A writer's ultimate vision demands the language he uses; my vision demands the language I use.

INTERVIEWER

What about your working habits? Are you Protestant and disciplined, or European and dissolute?

KOSINSKI

Being a part of the Protestant ethos for less than one third of my life, I acquired only some Protestant habits, while maintaining some of my former ones. Among the ones I acquired is the belief that I ought to answer my mail—a belief not shared by many happy intellectuals in Rome. And, of course, I am employed by others. I teach English prose and criticism at Yale. I am a member of the community. Occasionally I give public

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lectures, and I tend to talk as a social-scientist, not as a novelist. Some of my collective responsibility is clearly inherited from my Marxist training, some has been borrowed from Protestant America. However, in terms of my actual writing habits, I remain an East European. I write only when I feel like it and wherever I feel like it. I do it in a restaurant, on a plane, on a train, in a car. I wake up in the middle of the night to make notes to myself and never know when I'll sit down at the typewriter—or the tape recorder. The new book stays with me all the time, so I don't feel the urge to impose any strictures about "writing output."

INTERVIEWER

How long is the time of actually putting words to paper?

KOSINSKI

It varies. I think the longest uninterrupted stretch I ever had was twenty-seven hours. I produced nineteen pages of *The Painted Bird*, which in the drafts that followed shrank to one page. On an average I probably produce about a page, maybe a page and a half, in a sitting. I write very much the way some of my poet friends do. I begin with the sentence, a fragment of a scene I like, and then go either "above it" or "below it." Since I start with an image, let's say, of a man being driven in his car through the West Virginia countryside—a scene from my new book—I might write about the rain, and the end of the drive, and then go back to the scene's beginning. I still haven't written the scene's middle, so you can see that it's very much written in fragments. I always start a novel by writing its first page and its last page, which seem to survive almost intact through all the following drafts and changes.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have a title for the new book yet?

KOSINSKI

Only a code word: *Greenback*. Its protagonist is my ultimate polarity. He is young, he is American, he is an heir—I

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Draft 14 THE PAINTED BIRD X16/LEKH-Stup.Ludmila

Suddenly Stupid Ludmila appeared, leading her huge dog on a rope. She behaved oddly. She asked repeatedly about Lekh, and when I told her that he had left many days ago and that I did not know where he was, she alternately sobbed and laughed, walking from one corner of the cabin to another, followed by the gaze of the dog and the birds. She noticed Lekh's old cap, and pressed it against her cheeks and burst into tears. Then she abruptly threw the cap onto the floor and trampled it with her feet. She found a bottle of vodka under the bed that Lekh had left there. She drained it to the bottom, then turned, and looking furtively at me, ordered me to go with her to the pasture. I tried to escape, but she set her dog on me.

The pastures were stretching directly beyond the cemetary. A few cows were foraging not far off, and several young peasants warmed themselves at the fire. To avoid [illegible] we quickly crossed through the cemetery and climbed over a [illegible] fence. On the other side, where we could not be seen by Stupid Ludmila tied the dog to a tree, and threatened me with a belt and commanded me to take off my pants. She herself wriggled out of her sack and, naked, pulled me toward her.

After a moment of struggling and squirming, she drew me to lie down between her thighs, while she drew my face closer to her and ordered me to lie down between her thighs. I tried to free myself but she whipped me with the belt. My screams attracted the other shepherds.

Kosinski manuscript page

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envy him and, therefore, I have to be very careful not to take revenge on him; I must not cripple him with European afflictions. I think the tape recorder-darkroom experience I mentioned before helped me retain his fluidity. I notice I cross out less when I consider him in the drafts. I look at a sentence and immediately reach for a pencil to cross it out, but the lead is soft—so that the line it makes can be easily erased, and I promptly erase it. I don't want to cross out too much.

INTERVIEWER

Have all your books had code words?

KOSINSKI

Yes: every book had a code name before I had a title for it.

INTERVIEWER

What was *The Painted Bird's*?

KOSINSKI

It's code name was *The Jungle Book*. *Steps* was *The Two*. And *Being There* was *Blank Page*, and sometimes *Dasein*, a philosophical term, difficult to translate, which could mean the state in which one *is* and *is not* at the same time. One has to be careful with titles. If I had kept to that initial code name it would have connected the book, possibly, with the philosophy of Heidegger. As a matter of fact, one of the American critics learned from my publisher that *Dasein* was the code name, and months later wrote a very negative review of *Being There* as a Heideggerian novel—a terribly unfair thing to do. Had the code name been *Kapital*, he probably would have considered the book a Marxist novel.

INTERVIEWER

Unlike many writers, who are forever denying that they read their reviews, you seem to be rather interested in criticism.

KOSINSKI

I am attracted to literary criticism. In fact, to test my interest

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I wrote two critical essays on my own novels. I see no essential difference between various acts of creation. I think that literary criticism is just as creative as writing novels or poetry. It is unfortunate that in this country it has often been assumed, perhaps by the wives of the writers, or maybe the wives of the critics, that it is more glamorous to be a novelist than a critic, because as a novelist you are assumed to have lived your novels. Some of the Hollywood movies have contributed to this notion, I think. Also, a novelist can more easily claim that writing is hard work since you had to live all the awful things you are writing about. Conversely, being a literary critic is often considered "intellectual" and parasitic. You are living off the "hard gut" experiences of the novelist.

INTERVIEWER

Are you upset by adverse criticism of your work?

KOSINSKI

I am, but only when it is also bad art: poorly written, unimaginative, *ad hominem*, propagandistic, commercial. Among my favorite critics are some who claimed all my work to be inferior, overrated, crude, amoral; but they wrote all this creatively.

INTERVIEWER

To what do you attribute the success of your books?

KOSINSKI

I can only speculate, and judge by the echoes from reviews, letters, and some direct contact with the audience. I suspect my books are read for other reasons than the ones I would attribute to them. The younger Americans, the college generation, seem to see *The Painted Bird* as a symbolic novel about their lives: they are "the painted birds" in the hostile environment of industrial America. *Steps*, on the other hand, typifies to many of them the deadness of a man who is a product of an indifferent, atomized society, a society in which he is not only manipulated by others, but cannot help manipulating others.

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He becomes the walking credit card, removed from whatever vital forces he might have had. As for *Being There*, the reaction from younger audiences concerns their relationship to Chauncey Gardiner: they're afraid they're being turned into Chauncey Gardiners, that their parents have already elected him—a Reagan, the impact of the Nixon-Kennedy debate, the value of image making. They're upset by the findings of one candidate whose private poll showed that only 5% of those who voted for him knew his views, while the remaining voters claimed they liked him because he came across well on television. There's more and more preoccupation with the visual aspects of American political life. Think of the priorities given to the looks of our candidates. They all come across well on TV. Do we have a hunchback? A man with a missing jaw? A man with a nervous tic? No, he simply wouldn't make it. Can you imagine an American politician, however bright, with a damaged face, or with one eye? Moyshe Dayan, all right, he's up there; he's theirs, not ours.

INTERVIEWER

What was the reaction to your books in England?

KOSINSKI

The British tended to be upset by *The Painted Bird*, abhorred *Steps*, and accorded *Being There* a higher status than anywhere else. So the reception seems to vary from book to book, and from period to period. One has to assume that at different times different people will be reading the book for different reasons.

INTERVIEWER

Doesn't it bother you that there are so many different reactions and interpretations?

KOSINSKI

No. How do we know what Camus wanted to say in his novels? We only know what we perceive, and we read Camus for whatever we get from him now. A writer prompts a certain vision; he does not delineate it. His purpose is to awake,

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to trigger; the rest cannot be guessed. After all, if the writer's imagination is free enough to arrive at this triggering moment, why shouldn't the reader's imagination be equally good? A writer is not superior to anyone; he merely reflects a human ability to evoke.

INTERVIEWER

After the success of your early nonfiction, did you find it difficult to get your first novel, *The Painted Bird*, published?

KOSINSKI

Yes, I did. When I had the manuscript in its finished form, the first step was to show the book to four friends of mine, who were all editors in very large, respectable publishing houses in New York. All four had an interest in my work because of the nonfiction, and all four told me in very plain language that in their view the novel was not publishable in America.

INTERVIEWER

What were their reasons?

KOSINSKI

That it was a book dealing with a reality which is alien to Americans, set in an environment that Americans cannot comprehend, and dealing with situations, particularly the cruelty to animals, that Americans cannot bear. No fiction could possibly alter all this, they said, and certainly not *The Painted Bird*. Their verdict was: Go back to writing nonfiction. I asked them who, in their view, would be the *least* likely publisher for this book. They said short of Vatican City, I should try Houghton Mifflin in Boston. I sent the manuscript to Houghton Mifflin, and a few weeks later they cabled that they wanted to publish it. It appeared in the fall of 1965.

INTERVIEWER

Since you do teach English prose, what is your feeling about the future of the written word?

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KOSINSKI

I think it will survive where it has always really been—at the edge of contemporary sensibility. I think that's the proper place for it anyhow. Reading novels has always been an experience limited to a very small percentage of the so-called public. Increasingly, it's going to be a pursuit for those who seek unusual experiences, fetishists perhaps, people of abnormal imagination.

INTERVIEWER

Why such a limited audience?

KOSINSKI

Today, people are absorbed in the most common denominator, the *visual*. It requires no education to watch TV. It knows no age limit. Your infant child can watch the same program you do. Witness its role in the homes of the old and incurably sick. Television is everywhere. It has the immediacy which the evocative medium of language doesn't. Language requires some inner triggering; television doesn't. The image is ultimately accessible, i.e., extremely attractive. And, I think, ultimately deadly, because it turns the viewer into a bystander. Of course, that's a situation we have always dreamt of... the ultimate hope of religion was that it would release us from trauma. Television actually does so. It "proves" that you can always be an observer of the tragedies of others. The fact that one day you will die in front of the live show is irrelevant—you are reminded about it no more than you are reminded about real weather existing outside the TV weather program. You're not told to open your window and take a look; television will never say that. It says, instead, "The weather today is..." and so forth. The weatherman never says, "If you don't believe me, go find out."

From way back, our major development as a race of frightened beings has been towards how to avoid facing the discomfort of our existence, primarily the possibility of an accident, immediate death, ugliness, and the ultimate departure. In terms of all this, television is a very pleasing

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medium: one is always the observer. The life of discomfort is always accorded to others and even *this* is disqualified since one program immediately disqualifies the preceding one. Literature does not have this ability to soothe. You have to evoke and by evoking, you yourself have to provide your own inner setting. When you read about a man who dies, part of you dies with him because you have to recreate his dying inside your head.

INTERVIEWER

That doesn't happen with the visual?

KOSINSKI

No, because he dies on the screen in front of you and at any time you can turn it off or select another program. The evocative power is torpedoed by the fact that this is another man; your eye somehow perceives him as a visual object. Thus, of course, television is my ultimate enemy and it will push reading matter —including *The Paris Review*—to the extreme margin of human experience. Ultimately, it's going to be a pursuit for those who seek the unusual, masochists probably, who *want* sensations. They will all read *The Painted Bird*, I hope.

INTERVIEWER

But couldn't the masochists get enormous pleasure out of watching *The Painted Bird* as a film?

KOSINSKI

No. At best they would become voyeurs, which is a low level of experience. No. The very fact that it is happening on the screen tells the viewer two things: one, it is *not* about him; and two, it is not real. It is already *there*, it is artificial, it is about someone else.

INTERVIEWER

Doesn't one identify with Gary Cooper or John Wayne?

KOSINSKI

Very fleetingly. It's merely recognizing the symbol, saying, "This is John Wayne playing so and so." The optimum that

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the visual medium can aim at is the moment when the observer decodes what he sees on the screen. In a curious way, the better the film the more it reminds the observer that he is only observing; in the moment of ultimate terror on the screen the man in the audience says to himself, "Come on, hang on, it's only a film." With the novel, you cannot escape the evoking which is done within you since the screen is inside—and that is a very real and often painful process. But I never considered literature to be as important as the public highway system, for instance. Reading fiction is an esoteric pursuit; it aims at the blind and at those who can evoke, and the majority today don't have to. They are all provided with TV sets. I don't think literature ought to compete with cinema or television, though indeed it performs the essential function of the highest art... to bring man closer to what he is. The old Aristotelian idea: to *purge* him of his emotion—not merely to *show* him the emotion.

INTERVIEWER

You say that literature demands more involvement and more effort from the reader than the visual media. Is this why your last two novels have been so spare?

KOSINSKI

Yes. I do trust the reader. I think he is perfectly capable of filling in the blank spaces, of supplying what I purposefully withdrew. *Steps* attempts to involve the reader through nonuse of the clear and discernible plot. From the first sentence of the book, "I was traveling further south," when the reader starts traveling down the page, he is promised nothing, since there is no obvious plot to seduce him. He has to make the same decisions my protagonist is making: Will he continue? Is he interested in the next incident?

INTERVIEWER

Your intent, then, is subversive. You want to involve, to implicate the reader via his own imagination.

KOSINSKI

I guess I do. Once he is implicated he is an accomplice, he is

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provoked, he is involved, he is purged. That's why I won't give him moral guidelines. The reader must ask himself questions. Was it his curiosity that dragged him into the midst of my story, or was it recognition, his complicity? For me this is the ultimate purpose of writing.

INTERVIEWER

Do you want to be remembered as...

KOSINSKI

I don't want to be remembered. These are dehumanizing times—it's best to be forgotten. Continuous membership in the Atomic Age does not interest me.

INTERVIEWER

Yet you make copies of everything, file things away; you're very meticulous about preserving your work.

KOSINSKI

I merely facilitate the work of the executors of my Last Will. They will follow its text; meanwhile, I take care of its prefaces, footnotes, postscripts, etc.

INTERVIEWER

You always expect the worst?

KOSINSKI

No: the expected.

INTERVIEWER

But all the preparations against the future...

KOSINSKI

The future? All my plans have always turned out to be for yesterday.

George A. Plimpton
Rocco Landesman

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Tom Clark's most recent books are *Neil Young* and *John's Heart*.
Kenward Elmslie's most recent books are *Circus Nerves* (Black Sparrow Press) and *Motor Disturbance* (Columbia University Press), which won the 1971 Frank O'Hara Award for Poetry.
Allen Ginsberg has been working on recordings of poems by William Blake.
Gail Godwin is the author of *The Perfectionists* (Harper & Row, 1970) and *Glass People*, to be published this fall by Knopf.
Howard Grey has published two *photoromans*: *Depot* and *Small Dent*.
James Ivory's Indian films include *Shakespeare Wallah*.
Faye Kicknosway's poems have been published by the Alternative Press.
Rocco Landesman is an editor of *Yale/Theatre* magazine, and has published film criticism in *Cineaste* and *Film Heritage*.
Harry Mathew's novel, *The Sinking of the Odradek Stadium*, of which three sections have appeared in preceding issues of *The Paris Review*, is completed with the present instalment.
Michael O'Donoghue is the author of *The Adventures of Phoebe Zeit-Geist*. He is a senior editor of the *National Lampoon*.
Ron Padgett has published two books of poetry at Holt, Rinehart and Winston: *Great Balls of Fire* and *Big Bluejay Composition*.
Michael Rothschild is now writing a novel.
David Shetzline has published two novels: *DeFord* and *Heckletooth Three* (Random House).
George Swift Trow writes for *The New Yorker* and for the *National Lampoon*.
Serafina Voltic shows paintings and sculpture at Gallery Nadel in Zagreb.
Tom Walsh works in Long Beach, California.

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